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WHITE WINGS:

A Yachting Romance.

VOL. II.

WHITE WINGS:

A Yachting Romance.

BY

WILLIAM BLACK,

AUTHOR OF "THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A PHAETON,"
"GREEN PASTURES AND PICCADILLY," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

VILLANY ABROAD 1

CHAPTER II.

AN ULTIMATUM 20

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW SUITOR 39

CHAPTER IV.

CHASING A THUNDERSTORM 57

CHAPTER V.

CHASING SEALS 76

CHAPTER VI.

PAGE

"UNCERTAIN, COY, AND HARD TO PLEASE" 96

CHAPTER VII.

SECRET SCHEMES 116

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE BREAKFAST 133

CHAPTER IX.

A PROTECTOR 152

CHAPTER X.

"MARY, MARY!" 169

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNSPOKEN APPEAL 187

CHAPTER XII.

HIS LORDSHIP 211

CHAPTER XIII.

PAGE
THE LAIRD'S PLANS 224

CHAPTER XIV.

A SUNDAY IN FAR SOLITUDES 241

CHAPTER XV.

HIDDEN SPRINGS 260

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CHAPTER I.

VILLANY ABROAD.

It is near mid-day; two late people are sitting at breakfast; the skylight overhead has been lifted, and the cool sea-air fills the saloon.

"Dead calm again," says Angus Sutherland, for he can see the rose-red ensign hanging limp from the mizen-mast, a blaze of colour against the still blue.

There is no doubt that the *White Dove* is quite motionless; and that a perfect silence reigns around her. That is why we can hear

so distinctly—through the open skylight—the gentle footsteps of two people who are pacing up and down the deck, and the soft voice of one of them as she speaks to her friend. What is all this wild enthusiasm about, then?

"It is the noblest profession in the world!"—we can hear so much as she passes the skylight. "One profession lives by fomenting quarrels; and another studies the art of killing in every form; but this one lives only to heal—only to relieve the suffering and help the miserable. That is the profession I should belong to, if I were a man!"

Our young Doctor says nothing as the voice recedes; but he is obviously listening for the return walk along the deck. And here she comes again.

"The patient drudgery of such a life is quite heroic—whether he is a man of science, working day and night to find out things for the good of the world, nobody thanking him or caring about him, or whether he is a physician in practice with not a minute that can be called

his own — liable to be summoned at any hour——"

The voice again becomes inaudible. It is remarked to this young man that Mary Avon seems to have a pretty high opinion of the medical profession.

"She herself," he says hastily, with a touch of colour in his face, "has the patience and fortitude of a dozen doctors."

Once more the light tread on deck comes near the skylight.

"If I were the Government," says Mary Avon, warmly, "I should be ashamed to see so rich a country as England content to take her knowledge second-hand from the German Universities; while such men as Dr. Sutherland are harassed and hampered in their proper work by having to write articles and do ordinary doctor's visiting. I should be ashamed. If it is a want of money, why don't they pack off a dozen or two of the young noodles who pass the day whittling quills in the Foreign Office?——"

Even when modified by the distance, and by the soft lapping of the water outside, this seems rather strong language for a young lady. Why should Miss Avon again insist in such a warm fashion on the necessity of endowing research?

But Angus Sutherland's face is burning red. Listeners are said to hear ill of themselves.

"However, Dr. Sutherland is not likely to complain," she says, proudly, as she comes by again. "No; he is too proud of his profession. He does his work; and leaves the appreciation of it to others. And when everybody knows that he will one day be among the most famous men in the country, is it not monstrous that he should be harassed by drudgery in the meantime? If I were the Government——"

But Angus Sutherland cannot suffer this to go on. He leaves his breakfast unfinished, passes along the saloon, and ascends the companion.

"Good morning!" he says.

"Why, are you up already?" his hostess says. "We have been walking as lightly as

we could, for we thought you were both asleep. And Mary has been heaping maledictions on the head of the Government because it doesn't subsidise all you microscope-men. The next thing she will want is a licence for the whole of you to be allowed to vivisect criminals."

"I heard something of what Miss Avon said," he admitted.

The girl, looking rather aghast, glanced at the open skylight.

"We thought you were asleep," she stammered, and with her face somewhat flushed.

"At least, I heard you say something about the Government," he said, kindly. "Well, all I ask from the Government is to give me a trip like this every summer."

"What," says his hostess, "with a barometer that won't fall?"

"I don't mind."

"And seas like glass?"

"I don't mind."

"And the impossibility of getting back to land?"

"So much the better," he says defiantly.

"Why," she reminds him, laughing, "you were very anxious about getting back some days ago. What has made you change your wishes?"

He hesitates for a moment, and then he says—

"I believe a sort of madness of idleness has got possession of me. I have dallied so long with that tempting invitation of yours to stay and see the *White Dove* through the equinoctials that—that I think I really must give in——"

"You cannot help yourself," his hostess says, promptly. "You have already promised. Mary is my witness."

The witness seems anxious to avoid being brought into this matter; she turns to the Laird quickly, and asks him some question about Ru-na-Gaul light over there.

Ru-na-Gaul light no doubt it is — shining white in the sun at the point of the great cliffs; and there is the entrance to Tobbermorry; and here is Mingary Castle—brown ruins amid the

brilliant greens of those sloping shores—and there are the misty hills over Loch Sunart. For the rest, blue seas around us, glassy and still; and blue skies overhead, cloudless and pale. The barometer refuses to budge.

But suddenly there is a brisk excitement. What though the breeze that is darkening the water there is coming on right ahead?—we shall be moving any way. And as the first puffs of it catch the sails, Angus Sutherland places Mary Avon in command; and she is now—by the permission of her travelling physician—allowed to stand as she guides the course of the vessel. She has become an experienced pilot: the occasional glance at the leach of the top-sail is all that is needed; she keeps as accurately "full and by" as the master of one of the famous cuptakers.

"Now, Mary," says her hostess, "it all depends on you as to whether Angus will catch the steamer this evening."

"Oh, does it?" she says, with apparent innocence.

"Yes; we shall want very good steering to get within sight of Castle Osprey before the evening."

"Very well, then," says this audacious person.

At the same instant she deliberately puts the helm down. Of course the yacht directly runs up to the wind, her sails flapping helplessly. Everybody looks surprised; and John of Skye, thinking that the new skipper has only been a bit careless, calls out—

"Keep her full, mem, if you please."

"What do you mean, Mary? What are you about?" cries Queen T.

"I am not going to be responsible for sending Dr. Sutherland away," she says, in a matter-of-fact manner, "since he says he is in no hurry to go. If you wish to drive your guest away, I won't be a party to it. I mean to steer as badly as I can."

"Then I depose you," says Dr. Sutherland promptly. "I cannot have a pilot who disobeys orders."

"Very well," she says, "you may take the tiller yourself"—and she goes away, and sits down in high dudgeon, by the Laird.

So once more we get the vessel under way; and the breeze is beginning to blow somewhat more briskly; and we notice with hopefulness that there is rougher water further down the Sound. But with this slow process of beating, how are we to get within sight of Castle Osprey before the great steamer comes up from the South?

The Laird is puzzling over the Admiralty Sailing Directions. The young lady, deeply offended, who sits beside him, pays him great attention, and talks "at" the rest of the passengers with undisguised contempt.

"It is all haphazard, the sailing of a yacht," she says to him, though we can all hear. "Anybody can do it. But they make a jargon about it to puzzle other people, and pretend it is a science, and all that."

"Well," says the Laird, who is quite unaware of the fury that fills her brain, "there

are some of the phrases in this book that are verra extraordinary. In navigating this same Sound of Mull, they say you are to keep the 'weather shore aboard.' How can ye keep the weather shore aboard?"

"Indeed, if we don't get into a port soon," remarks our hostess and chief commissariat-officer, "it will be the only thing we shall have on board. How would you like it cooked, Mary?"

"I won't speak to any of you," says the disgraced skipper, with much composure.

"Will you sing to us, then?"

"Will you behave properly if you are reinstated in command?" asks Angus Sutherland.

"Yes, I will," she says, quite humbly; and forthwith she is allowed to have the tiller again.

Brisker and brisker grows the breeze; it is veering to the south, too; the sea is rising, and with it the spirits of everybody on board. The ordinarily sedate and respectable *White Dove* is showing herself a trifle frisky, more-

over; an occasional clatter below of hair-brushes or candlesticks tells us that people accustomed to calms fall into the habit of leaving their cabins ill-arranged.

"There will be more wind, sir," says John of Skye, coming aft; and he is looking at some long and streaky "mare's tails" in the south-western sky. "And if there wass a gale o' wind, I would let her have it!"

Why that grim ferocity of look, Captain John? Is the poor old *White Dove* responsible for the too fine weather, that you would like to see her driven, all wet and bedraggled, before a south-westerly gale? If you must quarrel with something, quarrel with the barometer; you may admonish it with a belaying-pin if you please.

Brisker and brisker grows the breeze. Now we hear the first pistol-shots of the spray come rattling over the bows; and Hector of Moidart has from time to time to duck his head, or shake the water from his jersey. The *White Dove* breasts these rushing waves and

a foam of white water goes hissing away from either side of her. Speine Môr and Speine Beg we leave behind; in the distance we can descry the ruins of Aros Castle and the deep indentation of Salen Bay; here we are passing the thick woods of Funeray. "*Farewell, farewell, to Funeray!*" The squally look in the south-west increases; the wind veers more and more. Commander Mary Avon is glad to resign the helm, for it is not easy to retain hold in these plunging seas.

"Why, you will catch the steamer after all, Angus!" says his hostess, as we go tearing by the mouth of Loch Aline.

"This is a good one for the last!" he calls to her. "Give her some more sheet, John; the wind is going round to the north!"

Whence comes the whirling storm in the midst of the calm summer weather? The blue heavens are as blue as the petal of a crane'sbill: surely such a sky has nothing to do with a hurricane. But wherever it comes from, it is welcome enough; and the brave

White Dove goes driving through those heavy seas, sometimes cresting them buoyantly, at other times meeting them with a dull shock, followed by a swish of water that rushes along the lee scuppers. And those two women-folk — without ulsters or other covering: it is a merry game to play jack-in-the-box, and duck their heads under the shelter of the gig when the spray springs into the air. But somehow the sea gets the best of it. Laugh as they may, they must be feeling rather damp about their hair; and as for Mary Avon's face—that has got a bath of salt-water at least a dozen times. She cares not. Sun, wind and sea she allows to do their worst with her complexion. Soon we shall have to call her the Nut-brown Maid.

Brisker and brisker grows the breeze. Angus Sutherland, with a rope round the tiller, has his teeth set hard: he is indeed letting the *White Dove* have it at last, for he absolutely refuses to have the topsail down. The main tack, then: might not that be hauled up?

No; he will have none of John of Skye's counsels. The *White Dove* tears her way through the water—we raise a cloud of birds from the rocks opposite Scallasdale—we see the white surf breaking in at Craignure—ahead of us is Lismore Lighthouse, perched over the whirling and struggling tides, shining white in the sunlight above the dark and driven sea.

Ahead she goes; the land she knows!

—past the shadowy ruins of Duart, and out and through the turbulent tides off the lighthouse rocks. The golden afternoon is not yet far advanced; let but this brave breeze continue, and soon they will descry the *White Dove* from the far heights of Castle Osprey!

But there was to be no Castle Osprey for Angus Sutherland that evening, despite the splendid run the *White Dove* had made. It was a race, indeed, between the yacht and the steamer for the quay; and notwithstanding that Mary Avon was counselling everybody to give it up as impossible, John of Skye would hold

to it in the hope of pleasing Dr. Sutherland himself. And no sooner was the anchor let go in the bay, than the gig was down from the davits; the men had jumped in; the solitary portmanteau was tossed into the stern; and Angus Sutherland was hurriedly bidding his adieux. The steamer was at this instant slowing into the quay.

"I forbid any one to say good-bye to him," says our Admiral-in-chief, sternly. "*Au revoir* — *auf Wiederschen* — anything you like — no good-bye."

Last of all he took Mary Avon's hand.

"You have promised, you know," she said, with her eyes cast down.

"Yes," said he, regarding her for an instant with a strange look—earnest perhaps, and yet timid—as if it would ask a question, and dared not—"I will keep my promise." Then he jumped into the boat.

That was a hard pull away to the quay; and even in the bay the water was rough, so that the back-sweep of the oars sometimes

caught the waves and sent the spray flying in the wind. The *Chevalier* had rung her bells. We made sure he would be too late. What was the reason of this good-natured indulgence? We lost sight of the gig in at the landing-slip.

Then the great steamer slowly steamed away from the quay: who was that on the paddle-box waving good-bye to us?

"Oh, yes, I can see him plainly," calls out Queen T., looking through a glass; and there is a general waving of handkerchiefs in reply to the still visible signal. Mary Avon waves her handkerchief, too—in a limp fashion. We do not look at her eyes.

And when the gig came back, and we bade good-bye for the time to the brave old *White Dove*, and set out for Castle Osprey, she was rather silent. In vain did the Laird tell her some of the very best ones about Homesh; she seemed anxious to get into the house and to reach the solitude of her own room.

But in the meantime there was a notable

bundle of letters, newspapers, and what not, lying on the hall-table. This was the first welcome that civilisation gave us. And although we defied these claims—and determined that not an envelope should be opened till after dinner—Mary Avon, having only one letter awaiting her, was allowed to read that. She did it mechanically, listlessly—she was not in very good spirits. But suddenly we heard her utter some slight exclamation; and then we turned and saw that there was a strange look on her face—of dismay and dread. She was pale, too, and bewildered—like one stunned. Then without a word, she handed the letter to her friend.

"What is the matter, Mary?"

But she read the letter—and, in her amazement, she repeated the reading of it, aloud. It was a brief, business-like, and yet friendly letter, from the manager of a certain bank in London. He said he was sorry to refer to painful matters; but no doubt Miss Avon had seen in the papers some mention of the

absconding of Mr. Frederick Smethurst, of —— —. He hoped there was nothing wrong; but he thought it right to inform Miss Avon that, a day or two before this disappearance, Mr. Smethurst had called at the bank and received, in obedience to her written instructions, the securities — U.S. Funded Stock — which the bank held in her name. Mr. Smethurst had explained that these bonds were deliverable to a certain broker; and that securities of a like value would be deposited with the bank in a day or two afterwards. Since then nothing had been heard of him till the Hue and Cry appeared in the newspapers. Such was the substance of the letter.

"But it isn't true!" said Mary Avon, almost wildly. "I cannot believe it. I will not believe it. I saw no announcement in the papers. And I did give him the letter—he was acting quite rightly. What do they want me to believe?"

"Oh, Mary!" cries her friend, "why did you not tell us? Have you parted with everything?"

"The money?" says the girl—with her white face, and frightened pathetic eyes. "Oh, I do not care about the money! It has got nothing to do with the money. But—but—he—was my mother's only brother."

The lips tremble for a moment; but she collects herself. Her courage fights through the stun of this sudden blow.

"I will not believe it!" she says. "How dare they say such things of him? How is it we have never seen anything of it in the papers?"

But the Laird leaves these and other wild questions to be answered at leisure. In the meantime, his eyes are burning like coals of fire; and he is twisting his hands together in a vain endeavour to repress his anger and indignation.

"Tell them to put a horse to," he says in a voice the abruptness of which startles every one. "I want to drive to the telegraph-office. This is a thing for men to deal wi'—not weemen."

CHAPTER II.

AN ULTIMATUM.

When our good friend the Laird of Dennymains came back from the post-office, he seemed quite beside himself with wrath. And yet his rage was not of the furious and loquacious sort; it was reticent, and deep, and dangerous. He kept pacing up and down the gravel-path in front of the house, while as yet dinner was not ready. Occasionally he would rub his hands vehemently, as if to get rid of some sort of electricity; and once or twice we heard him ejaculate to himself, "The scoondrel! The scoondrel!" It was in vain that our gentle Queen Titania, always anxious to think the best of everybody, broke in on these fierce meditations, and asked the

Laird to suspend his judgment. How could he be sure, she asked, that Frederick Smethurst had really run away with his niece's little property? He had come to her and represented that he was in serious difficulties; that this temporary loan of seven thousand pounds or so would save him; that he would repay her directly certain remittances came to him from abroad. How could he, the Laird, know that Frederick Smethurst did not mean to keep his promise?

But Denny-mains would have none of these possibilities. He saw the whole story clearly. He had telegraphed for confirmation; but already he was convinced. As for Frederick Smethurst being a swindler—that did not concern him, he said. As for the creditors, that was their own look-out: men in business had to take their chance. But that this miscreant, this ruffian, this mean hound should have robbed his own niece of her last farthing—and left her absolutely without resources or protection of any kind in the

world—this it was that made the Laird's eyes burn with a dark fire. "The scoondrel!—the scoondrel!" he said; and he rubbed his hands as though he would wrench the fingers off.

We should have been more surprised at this exhibition of rage on the part of a person so ordinarily placid as Denny-mains, but that every one had observed how strong had become his affection for Mary Avon during our long days on the Atlantic. If she had been twenty times his own daughter he could not have regarded her with a greater tenderness. He had become at once her champion and her slave. When there was any playful quarrel between the young lady and her hostess, he took the side of Mary Avon with a seriousness that soon disposed of the contest. He studied her convenience to the smallest particular when she wished to paint on deck; and so far from hinting that he would like to have Tom Galbraith revise and improve her work, he now said that he would have pride in showing her productions to that

famous artist. And perhaps it was not quite so much the actual fact of the stealing of the money as the manner and circumstance of it that now wholly upset his equilibrium, and drove him into this passion of rage. "The scoondrel!—the scoondrel!" he muttered to himself, in these angry pacings to and fro.

Then he surprised his hostess by suddenly stopping short, and uttering some brief chuckle of laughter.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said he, "for the leeberty I have taken; but I was at the telegraph-office in any case; and I thought ye would not mind my sending for my nephew Howard. Ye were so good as to say——"

"Oh, we shall be most pleased to see him," said she promptly. "I am sure he must have heard us talking about the yacht; he will not mind a little discomfort——"

"He will have to take what is given him, and be thankful," said the Laird, sharply. "In my opeenion the young people of the

present day are too much given to picking and choosing. They will not begin as their parents began. Only the best of everything is good enough for them."

But here the Laird checked himself.

"No, no, ma'am," said he. "My nephew Howard is not like that. He is a good lad—a sensible lad. And as for his comfort on board that yacht, I'm thinking it's not that, but the opposite, he has to fear most. Ye are spoiling us all—the crew included."

"Now we must go in to dinner," is the practical answer.

"Has she come down?" asks the Laird, in a whisper.

"I suppose so."

In the drawing-room we found Mary Avon. She was rather pale, and silent—that was all; and she seemed to wish to avoid observation. But when dinner was announced the Laird went over to her, and took her hand, and led her into the dining-room, just as he might have led a child. And he arranged her chair

for her; and patted her on the back as he passed on, and said cheerfully—

"Quite right—quite right—don't believe all the stories ye hear. *Nil desperandum*—we're not beaten down yet!"

She sate cold and white, with her eyes cast down. He did not know that in the interval her hostess had been forced to show the girl that paragraph of the Hue and Cry.

"*Nil desperandum*—that's it," continued the good-hearted Laird, in his blithest manner. "Keep your own conscience clear, and let other people do as they please—that is the philosophy of life. That is what Dr. Sutherland would say to ye, if he was here."

This chance reference to Angus Sutherland was surely made with the best intentions; but it produced a strange effect on the girl. For an instant or two she tried to maintain her composure—though her lips trembled; then she gave way, and bent her head, and burst out crying, and covered her face with her hands. Of course her kind friend and

hostess was with her in a moment, and soothed her, and caressed her, and got her to dry her eyes. Then the Laird said, after a second or two of inward struggle—

"Oh, do you know that there is a steamer run on the rocks at the mouth of Loch Etive?"

"Oh, yes," his hostess—who had resumed her seat—said cheerfully. "That is a good joke. They say the captain wanted to be very clever; and would not have a pilot, though he knows nothing about the coast. So he thought he would keep mid-channel in going into the Loch!"

The Laird looked puzzled: where was the joke?

"Oh," said she, noticing his bewilderment, "don't you know that at the mouth of Loch Etive the rocks are right in the middle, and the channel on each side? He chose precisely the straight line for bringing his vessel full tilt on the rocks!"

So this was the joke, then: that a valuable

ship should be sunk? But it soon became apparent that any topic was of profound interest—was exceedingly facetious even—that could distract Mary Avon's attention. They would not let her brood over this thing. They would have found a joke in a coffin. And indeed amidst all this talking and laughing Mary Avon brightened up considerably; and took her part bravely; and seemed to have forgotten all about her uncle and his evil deeds. You could only have guessed from a certain preoccupation that, from time to time, these words must have been appearing before her mind, their commonplace and matter-of-fact phraseology in no way detracting from their horrible import: "*Police-officers and others are requested to make immediate search and inquiry for the above named; and those stationed at sea-port towns are particularly requested to search outward-bound vessels.*" The description of Mr. Frederick Smethurst that preceded this injunction was not very flattering.

But among all the subjects, grave and gay,

on which the Laird touched during this repast, there was none he was so serious and pertinacious about as the duty owed by young people to their parents and guardians. It did not seem an opportune topic. He might, for example, have enlarged upon the duties of guardians towards their helpless and unprotected wards. However, on this matter he was most decided. He even cross-examined his hostess, with an unusual sternness, on the point. What was the limit—was there any limit—she would impose on the duty which young folks owed to those who were their parents or who stood to them in the relation of parents? Our sovereign mistress, a little bit frightened, said she had always found her boys obedient enough. But this would not do. Considering the care and affection bestowed on them—considering the hardly-earned wealth spent on them—considering the easy fortune offered to them—was it not bounden on young people to consult and obey the wishes of those who had done so much for

them? She admitted that such was the case. Pressed to say where the limit of such duty should lie, she said there was hardly any. So far good; and the Laird was satisfied.

It was not until two days afterwards that we obtained full information by letter of what was known regarding the proceedings of Frederick Smethurst, who, it appears, before he bolted, had laid hands on every farthing of money he could touch, and borrowed from the credulous among his friends; so that there remained no reasonable doubt that the story he had told his niece was among his other deceptions, and that she was left penniless. No one was surprised. It had been almost a foregone conclusion. Mary Avon seemed to care little about it; the loss of her fortune was less to her than the shame and dishonour that this scoundrel had brought on her mother's name.

But this further news only served to stir up once more the Laird's slumbering wrath. He kept looking at his watch.

"She'll be off Easdale now," said he to

himself; and we knew he was speaking of the steamer that was bringing his nephew from the south.

By and by—"She'll be near Kerrara, now," he said, aloud. "Is it not time to drive to the quay?"

It was not time, but we set out. There was the usual crowd on the quay when we got there; and far off we could descry the red funnels and the smoke of the steamer. Mary Avon had not come with us.

"What a beautiful day your nephew must have had for his sail from the Crinan," said the Laird's gentle hostess to him.

Did he not hear her? Or was he absorbed in his own thoughts? His answer, at all events, was a strange one.

"It is the first time I have asked anything of him," he said almost gloomily. "I have a right to expect him to do something for me now."

The steamer slows in; the ropes are thrown across; the gangways run up; and the crowd

begins to pour out. And here is a tall and handsome young fellow who comes along with a pleasant smile of greeting on his face.

"How do you do, Mr. Smith?" says Queen T., very graciously—but she does not call him "Howard" as she calls Dr. Sutherland "Angus."

"Well, uncle," says he, brightly, when he has shaken hands all round, "what is the meaning of it all? Are you starting for Iceland in a hurry? I have brought a rifle as well as my breechloader. But perhaps I had better wait to be invited?"

This young man with the clear, pale complexion, and the dark hair, and dark grey eyes, had good looks and a pleasant smile in his favour; he was accustomed to be made welcome; he was at ease with himself. He was not embarrassed that his uncle did not immediately answer; he merely turned and called out to the man who had got his luggage. And when we had got him into the waggonette, and were driving off, what

must he needs talk about but the absconding of Mr. Frederick Smethurst, whom he knew to be the uncle of a young lady he had once met at our house.

"Catch him?" said he with a laugh. "They'll never catch him."

His uncle said nothing at all.

When we reached Castle Osprey, the Laird said in the hall, when he had satisfied himself that there was no one within hearing—

"Howard, I wish to have a few meenutes' talk with ye; and perhaps our good friends here will come into the room too——"

We followed him into the dining-room; and shut the door.

"—just to see whether there is anything unreasonable in what I have got to say to ye."

The young man looked rather alarmed; there was an unusual coldness and austerity in the elder man's voice.

"We may as well sit down," he said; "it wants a little explanation."

We sate down in silence, Howard Smith

looking more concerned than ever. He had a real affection, as we knew, for this pseudo-uncle of his, and was astounded that he should be spoken to in this formal and cold manner.

The Laird put one or two letters on the table before him.

"I have asked our friends here," said he, in a calm and measured voice, "to listen to what I have to say, and they will judge whether it is unreasonable. I have a service to ask of ye. I will say nothing of the relations between you and me before this time—but I may tell ye frankly—what doubtless ye have understood—that I had intended to leave ye Denny-mains at my death. I have neither kith nor kin of my own blood; and it was my intention that ye should have Denny-mains—perhaps even before I was called away."

The young man said nothing; but the manner in which the Laird spoke of his intentions in the past sense might have made the most disinterested of heirs look frightened. After all,

he had certainly been brought up on the understanding that he was to succeed to the property.

"Now," said he, slowly, "I may say I have shown ye some kindness——"

"Indeed you have, sir!" said the other warmly.

"—and I have asked nothing from ye in return. I would ask nothing now, if I was your age. If I was twenty years younger, I would not have telegraphed for ye—indeed no, I would have taken the matter into my own hands——"

Here the Laird paused for a second or so to regain that coldness of demeanour with which he had started.

"Ay, just so. Well, ye were talking about the man Smethurst as we were coming along. His niece, as ye may be aware, is in this house—a better lass was never seen within any house."

The Laird hesitated more and more as he came to the climax of his discourse: it was

obviously difficult for him to put this restraint on himself.

"Yes," said he, speaking a little more hurriedly, "and that scoondrel—that scoondrel—has made off with every penny that the poor lass had—every penny of it—and she is left an orphan—without a farthing to maintain herself wi'—and that infernal scoondrel——"

The Laird jumped from his seat; his anger was too much for him.

"I mean to stand by her," said he, pacing up and down the room, and speaking in short ejaculations. "She will not be left without a farthing. I will reach him too, if I can. Ay, ay, if I was but twenty years younger, and had that man before me!"

He stopped short opposite his nephew, and controlled himself so as to speak quite calmly.

"I would like to see ye settled at Dennymains, Howard," said he. "And ye would want a wife. Now if ye were to marry this young leddy, it would be the delight of my

old age to see ye both comfortable and well provided for. And a better wife ye would not get within this country. Not a better!"

Howard Smith stared.

"Why, uncle!" said he, as if he thought some joke was going forward. We, who had been aware of certain profound plans on the part of Denny-mains, were less startled by this abrupt disclosure of them.

"That is one of two things," said the Laird, with forced composure, "that I wished to put before ye. If it is impossible, I am sorely vexed. But there is another; and one or the other, as I have been thinking, I am fairly entitled to ask of ye. So far I have not thought of any return for what I have done; it has been a pleasure to me to look after your up-bringing."

"Well, uncle," said the young man, beginning to look a little less frightened. "I would rather hear of the other thing. You know—eh—that is—a girl does not take anybody who is flung at her, as it were—it would be an insult

—and—and people's inclinations and affections——"

"I know—I know—I know," said the Laird, impatiently. "I have gone over all that. Do ye think I am a fool? If the lass will not have ye, there is an end to it: do your best to get her, and that is enough for me."

"There was another thing—" the young man suggested timidly.

"Yes, there is," said the Laird, with a sudden change in his manner. "It is a duty, sir, ye owe not to me, but to humanity. Ye are young, strong, have plenty of time, and I will give ye the money. Find out that man Smethurst; get him face to face; and fell him! Fell him!"—the Laird brought his fist down on the table with a bang that made everything jump, and his eyes were like coals of fire. "None o' your pistols or rapiers or trash like that!—no, no!—a mark on his face for the rest of his life—the brand of a scoondrel between his eyes—there! will ye do that for me?"

"But, uncle," cried the young man, finding

this alternative about as startling as the other, "how on earth can I find him? He is off to Brazil, or Mexico, or California, long ere now, you may depend on it."

The Laird had pulled himself together again.

"I have put two things before ye," said he, calmly. "It is the first time I have asked ye for a service, after having brought ye up as few lads have been brought up. If you think it is unfair of me to make a bargain about such things, I will tell ye frankly that I have more concern in that young thing left to herself than in any creature now living on earth; and I will be a friend to her as well as an old man can. I have asked our friends here to listen to what I had to say; they will tell ye whether I am unreasonable. I will leave ye to talk it over."

He went to the door. Then he turned for a moment to his hostess.

"I am going to see, ma'am, if Mary will go for a bit walk wi' me—down to the shore, or the like; but we will be back before the hour for denner."

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW SUITOR.

It is only those who have lived with her for a number of years who can tell when a certain person becomes possessed with the demon of mischief, and allows sarcasm and malignant laughter and other unholy delights to run riot in her brain. The chief symptom is the assumption of an abnormal gravity, and a look of simple and confiding innocence that appears in the eyes. The eyes tell most of all. The dark pupils seem even clearer than is their wont, as if they would let you read them through and through ; and there is a sympathetic appeal in them ; the woman seems so anxious to be kind, and friendly, and considerate. And all the time — especially if it be a man who is

hopelessly dumfoundered—she is revenging the many wrongs of her sex by covertly laughing at him and enjoying his discomfiture.

And no doubt the expression on Howard Smith's face, as he sat there in a bewildered silence, was ludicrous enough. He was inclined to laugh the thing away as a joke, but he knew that the Laird was not given to practical jokes. And yet—and yet—

"Do you really think he is serious?" he blurted out at length, and he spoke to this lady with the gentle innocent eyes.

"Oh, undoubtedly," she answered, with perfect gravity.

"Oh, no; it is impossible!" he said, as if arguing with himself. "Why, my uncle, of all men in the world,—and pretending it was serious—of course people often do wish their sons or daughters to marry a particular person—for a sensible reason, to keep estates together, or to join the fortunes of a family—but this—no, no; this is a joke, or else he wants to drive me into giving that fellow a licking. And that,

you know, is quite absurd; you might as well drag the Atlantic for a penknife."

"I am afraid your uncle is quite serious," said she, demurely.

"But it was to be left to you," he answered quickly. "You were to say whether it was unreasonable. Surely you must see it is not reasonable. Neither the one thing nor the other is possible—"

Here the young man paused for a moment.

"Surely," he said, "my uncle can't mean, by putting these impossible things before me, to justify his leaving his property to somebody else? There was no need for any such excuse; I have no claim on him; he has a right to do what he pleases."

"That has nothing to do with it," said Queen T. promptly. "Your uncle is quite resolved, I know, that you should have Dennymains."

"Yes—and a wife," responded the young man, with a somewhat wry smile. "Oh, but you know, it is quite absurd; you will reason

him out of it, won't you? He has such a high opinion of your judgment, I know."

The ingenious youth!

"Besides," said he warmly, "do you think it very complimentary to your friend Miss Avon that any one should be asked to come and marry her?"

This was better; it was an artful thrust. But the bland sympathetic eyes only paid him a respectful attention.

"I know my uncle is pretty firm when he has got a notion into his head," said he, "and —and—no doubt he is quite right in thinking that the young lady has been badly treated, and that somebody should give the absconder a thrashing. All that is quite right; but why should I be made responsible for it? I can't do impossible things."

"Well, you see," said his sage adviser, with a highly matter-of-fact air, "your uncle may not regard either the one thing or the other as impossible."

"But they are impossible," said he.

"Then I am very sorry," said she, with great sweetness. "Because Denny-mains is really a beautiful place. And the house would lend itself splendidly to a thorough scheme of re-decoration; the hall could be made perfectly lovely. I would have the wooden dado painted a dark bottle-green, and the wall over it a rich Pompeian red—I don't believe the colours of a hall can be too bold if the tones are good in themselves. Pompeian red is a capital back-ground for pictures, too; and I like to see pictures in the hall; the gentlemen can look at them while they are waiting for their wives. Don't you think Indian matting makes a very nice, serviceable, sober-coloured dado for a dining-room—so long as it does not drive your pictures too high on the wall?"

The fiendishness of this woman! Denny-mains was being withdrawn from him at this very moment; and she was bothering him with questions about its decoration. What did he think of Indian matting?

"Well," said he, "if I am to lose my chance

of Denny-mains through this piece of absurdity, I can't help it."

"I beg your pardon," said she most amiably; "but I don't think your uncle's proposal so very absurd. It is the commonest thing in the world for people to wish persons in whom they are interested to marry each other; and very often they succeed by merely getting the young people to meet, and so forth. You say yourself that it is reasonable in certain cases. Well, in this case, you probably don't know how great an interest your uncle takes in Miss Avon, and the affection that he has for her. It is quite remarkable. And he has been dwelling on this possibility of a match between you—of seeing you both settled at Denny-mains—until he almost regards it as already arranged. 'Put yourself in his place,' as Mr. Reade says. It seems to him the most natural thing in the world, and I am afraid he will consider you very ungrateful if you don't fall in with his plan."

Deeper and deeper grew the shadow of

perplexity on the young man's brow. At first he had seemed inclined to laugh the whole matter aside, but the gentle reasoning of this small person had a ghastly aspect of seriousness about it.

"Then his notion of my seeking out the man Smethurst and giving him a thrashing: you would justify that, too?" he cried.

"No, not quite," she answered, with a bit of a smile. "That is a little absurd, I admit—it is merely an ebullition of anger. He won't think any more of that in a day or two I am certain. But the other—the other, I fear, is a fixed idea."

At this point we heard some one calling outside:

"Miss Mary! I have been searching for ye everywhere; are ye coming for a walk down to the shore?"

Then a voice, apparently overhead at an open window—

"All right, sir; I will be down in a moment."

Another second or two, and we hear some one singing on the stair, with a fine air of bravado—

A strong sou-wester's blowing, Billy; can't you hear it roar, now?

—the gay voice passes through the hall—

Loed help 'em, how I pities all un—

—then the last phrase is heard outside—

—folks on shore now—

Queen Titania darts to the open window of the dining-room.

"Mary! Mary!" she calls. "Come here."

The next instant a pretty enough picture is framed by the lower half of the window, which is open. The background is a blaze of scarlet and yellow and green—a mixture of sunlight and red poppies and nasturtiums and glancing fuchsia leaves. Then this slight figure that has appeared is dark in shadow; but there is a soft reflected light from the front of the house, and that just shows you the smile

on Mary Avon's face and the friendliness of her dark soft eyes.

"Oh, how do you do?" she says, reaching in her hand and shaking hands with him. There is not any timidity in her manner. No one has been whispering to her of the dark plots surrounding her.

Nor was Mr. Smith much embarrassed, though he did not show himself as grateful as a young man might have done for so frank and friendly a welcome.

"I scarcely thought you would have remembered me," said he modestly. But at this moment Denny-mains interfered, and took the young lady by the arm, and dragged her away. We heard their retreating footsteps on the gravel walk.

"So you remember her?" says our hostess, to break the awkward silence.

"Oh, yes, well enough," said he; and then he goes on to say stammeringly—"Of course, I—I have nothing to say against her——"

"If you have," it is here interposed, as a

wholesome warning, "you had better not mention it here. Ten thousand hornets' nests would be a fool compared to this house if you said anything in it against Mary Avon."

"On the contrary," says he, "I suppose she is a very nice girl indeed—very—I suppose there's no doubt of it. And if she has been robbed like that, I am very sorry for her; and I don't wonder my uncle should be interested in her, and concerned about her, and—and all that's quite right. But it is too bad—it is too bad—that one should be expected to—to ask her to be one's wife, and a sort of penalty hanging over one's head, too. Why, it is enough to set anybody against the whole thing; I thought everybody knew that you can't get people to marry if you drive them to it—except in France, I suppose, where the whole business is arranged for you by your relatives. This isn't France; and I am quite sure Miss Avon would consider herself very unfairly treated if she thought she was being made part and parcel of any such arrangement.

As for me—well, I am very grateful to my uncle for his long kindness to me; he has been kindness itself to me; and it is quite true, as he says, that he has asked for nothing in return. Well, what he asks now is just a trifle too much. I won't sell myself for any property. If he is really serious—if it is to be a compulsory marriage like that—Dennymains can go. I shall be able to earn my own living somehow."

There was a chord struck in this brief, hesitating, but emphatic speech that went straight to his torturer's heart. A look of liking and approval sprang to her eyes. She would no longer worry him.

"Don't you think," said she gently, "that you are taking the matter too seriously? Your uncle does not wish to force you into a marriage against your will; he knows nothing about Adelphi melodramas. What he asks is simple and natural enough. He is, as you see, very fond of Mary Avon; he would like to see her well provided for; he would like to

see you settled and established at Dennymains. But he does not ask the impossible. If she does not agree, neither he nor you can help it. Don't you think it would be a very simple matter for you to remain with us for a time, pay her some ordinary friendly attention, and then show your uncle that the arrangement he would like does not recommend itself to either you or her? He asks no more than that; it is not much of a sacrifice."

There was no stammering about this lady's exposition of the case. Her head is not very big, but its perceptive powers are remarkable.

Then the young man's face brightened considerably.

"Well," said he, "that would be more sensible, surely. If you take away the threat, and the compulsion, and all that, there can be no harm in my being civil to a girl, especially when she is, I am sure, just the sort of girl one ought to be civil to. I am sure she has plenty of common sense——"

It is here suggested once more that, in this

house, negative praise of Mary Avon is likely to awake slumbering lions.

"Oh, I have no doubt," says he readily, "that she is a very nice girl indeed. One would not have to pretend to be civil to some creature stuffed with affectation, or a ghoul. I don't object to this at all. If my uncle thinks it enough, very well. And I am quite sure that a girl you think so much of would have more self-respect than to expect anybody to go and make love to her in the country-bumpkin style."

Artful again; but it was a bad shot. There was just a little asperity in Madame's manner when she said—

"I beg you not to forget that Mary does not wish to be made love to by anybody. She is quite content as she is. Perhaps she has quite other views, which you would not regret, I am sure. But don't imagine that she is looking for a husband; or that a husband is necessary for her; or that she won't find friends to look after her It is your interests we are considering, not hers."

Was the snubbing sufficient?

"Oh, of course, of course," said he, quite humbly. "But then, you know, I was only thinking that—that—if I am to go in and make believe about being civil to your young lady-friend, in order to please my uncle, too much should not be expected. It isn't a very nice thing—at least, for you it may be very nice—to look on at a comedy——"

"And is it so very hard to be civil to a girl?" says his monitress sharply. "Mary will not shock you with the surprise of her gratitude. She might have been married ere now if she had chosen."

"She—isn't—quite a school-girl, you know," he says timidly.

"I was not aware that men preferred to marry school-girls," says the other, with a gathering majesty of demeanour.

Here a humble witness of this interview has once more to interpose to save this daring young man from a thunderbolt. Will he not understand that the remotest and most round-

about reflection on Mary Avon is in this house the unpardonable sin?

"Well," said he frankly, "it is exceedingly kind of you to show me how I am to get out of this troublesome affair; and I am afraid I must leave it to you to convince my uncle that I have done sufficient. And it is very kind of you to ask me to go yachting with you; I hope I shall not be in the way. And—and—there is no reason at all why Miss Avon and I should not become very good friends—in fact, I hope we shall become such good friends that my uncle will see we could not be anything else."

Could anything be fairer than this? His submission quite conquered his hostess. She said she would show him some of Mary Avon's sketches in oil, and led him away for that purpose. His warm admiration confirmed her good opinion of him; henceforth he had nothing to fear.

At dinner that evening he was at first a little shy; perhaps he had a suspicion that there were present one or two spectators of a certain

comedy which he had to play all by himself. But, indeed, our eyes and ears were not for him alone. Miss Avon was delighting the Laird with stories of the suggestions she had got about her pictures from the people who had seen them—even from the people who had bought them—in London.

"And you know," said she quite frankly, "I must study popular taste as much as I fairly can now, for I have to live by it. If people will have sea-pieces spoiled by having figures put in, I must put in figures. By and by I may be in a position to do my own work in my own way."

The Laird glanced at his nephew: was it not for him to emancipate this great and original artist from the fear of critics, and dealers, and purchasers? There was no response.

"I mean to be in London soon myself," the Laird said abruptly; "ye must tell me where I can see some of your pictures."

"Oh, no," she said, laughing, "I shall not victimise my friends. I mean to prey on the public—if possible. It is Mr. White, in King

Street, St. James's, however, who has taken most of my pictures hitherto; and so if you know of anybody who would like to acquire immortal works for a few guineas apiece, that is the address."

"I am going to London myself soon," said he, with a serious air, as if he had suddenly determined on buying the National Gallery.

Then Howard Smith, perceiving that no one was watching him, or expecting impossibilities of him, became quite cheerful and talkative; and told some excellent stories of his experiences at various shooting quarters the previous winter. Light-hearted, good-natured, fairly humorous, he talked very well indeed. We gathered that during the last months of the year the shooting of pheasants occupied a good deal more of his time and attention than the study of law. And how could one wonder that so pleasant-mannered a young man was a welcome guest at those various country-houses in the south?

But it appeared that, despite all this careless talk, he had been keeping an eye on Mary Avon

during dinner. Walking down to the yacht afterwards—the blood-red not quite gone from the western skies, a cool wind coming up from the sea—he said casually to his uncle—

"Well, sir, whatever trouble that young lady may have gone through has not crushed her spirits yet. She is as merry as a lark."

"She has more than cheerfulness—she has courage," said the Laird, almost severely. "Oh, ay, plenty of courage. And I have no doubt she could fight the world for herself just as well as any man I know. But I mean to make it my business that she shall not have to fight the world for herself—not as long as there is a stick standing on Denny-mains!"

CHAPTER IV.

CHASING A THUNDERSTORM.

"*All on board then—all on board!*" the summons comes ringing through the wonder-land of dreams. And then, amid the general hurry and scurry throughout the house, certain half-bewildered people turn first of all to the windows of their rooms: a welcome sight! The glory of the summer dawn is shining over the mountains; the *White Dove*, with nearly all her sail set, is swinging there at her moorings; best of all, a strong breeze—apparently from the north-east — is ruffling the dark blue seas and driving a line of white surf on the further shores. The news comes that Master Fred, by darting about in the dingay since ever daylight began, has got the very last

basket on board; the red caps are even now bringing the gig in to the landing slip; John of Skye is all impatience to take advantage of the favourable wind. There is but little time lost; the happy-go-lucky procession—*dona ferentes*—set out for the beach. And if the Laird is pleased to find his nephew apparently falling into his scheme with a good grace; and if the nephew thinks he is very lucky to get so easily out of an awkward predicament; and if Mary Avon—unconscious of these secret designs—is full of an eager delight at the prospect of being allowed to set to work again—may not all this account for a certain indecorous gaiety that startles the silence of the summer morning? Or is it that mythical hero Homesh who is responsible for this laughter? We hear the Laird chuckling; we notice the facetious wrinkles about his eyes; we make sure it must be Homesh. Then the final consignment of books, shawls, gun-cases, and what not is tossed into the gig; and away we go, with the measured dash of the oars.

And what does the bearded John of Skye think of the new hand we have brought him? Has he his own suspicions? Is his friend and sworn ally, Dr. Sutherland, to be betrayed and supplanted in his absence?

"Good morning, sir," he says obediently, at the gangway; and the quick Celtic eyes glance at Howard Smith from top to toe.

"Good morning, captain," the young man says lightly; and he springs too quickly up the steps, making a little bit of a stumble. This is not an auspicious omen.

Then on deck: the handsome figure and pleasant manner of this young man ought surely to prepossess people in his favour. What if his tightly-fitting garments and his patent-leather boots and white gaiters are not an orthodox yachting rig? John of Skye would not judge of a man by his costume. And if he does not seem quite at home—in this first look round—every one is not so familiar with boating life as Dr. Sutherland. It is true, an umbrella used as a walking-stick looks

strange on board a yacht; and he need not have put it on the curved top of the companion, for it immediately rolls over into the scuppers. Nor does he seem to see the wickedness of placing a heavy bundle of canvases on the raised skylight of the ladies' cabin; does he want to start the glass? Dr. Sutherland, now, would have given the men a hand in hauling up the gig. Dr. Sutherland would not have been in the way of the tiller, as the yacht is released from her moorings.

Unaware of this rapid criticism, and unconcerned by all the bustle going on around, our new friend is carelessly and cheerfully chatting with his hostess; admiring the yacht; praising the beauty of the summer morning; delighted with the prospect of sailing in such weather. He does not share in the profound curiosity of his uncle about the various duties of the men. When John of Skye, wishing to leave the tiller for a minute to overhaul the lee tackle, turns quite naturally to Mary Avon, who is standing by him, and says with a grin of apology, "If

ye please, mem," the young man betrays but little surprise that this young lady should be entrusted with the command of the vessel.

"What!" he says, with a pleasant smile—they seem on very friendly terms already—"can you steer, Miss Avon? Mind you don't run us against any rocks."

Miss Avon has her eye on the mainsail. She answers, with a business-like air—

"Oh, there is no fear of that. What I have to mind, with this wind, is not to let her gybe, or I should get into disgrace."

"Then I hope you wont let her gybe, whatever that is," said he, with a laugh.

Never was any setting-out more auspicious. We seemed to have bade farewell to those perpetual calms. Early as it was in the morning, there was no still, dream-like haze about the mountains; there was a clear greenish-yellow where the sunlight struck them; the great slopes were dappled with the shadows of purple-brown; further away the tall peaks were of a decided blue. And then the

windy, fresh, brisk morning; the *White Dove* running races with the driven seas; the white foam flying away from her sides. John of Skye seemed to have no fear of this gentle skipper. He remained forward, superintending the setting of the topsail; the *White Dove* was to "have it" while the fresh breeze continued to blow.

And still the squally easterly wind bears her bravely onward, the puffs darkening the water as they pass us and strike the rushing seas. Is that a shadow of Colonsay on the far southern horizon? The lighthouse people here have gone to bed; there is not a single figure along the yellow-white walls. Look at the clouds of gulls on the rocks, resting after their morning meal. By this time the deer have retreated into the high slopes above Craignure; there is a white foam breaking along the bay of Innismore. And still the *White Dove* spins along, with foam-diamonds glittering in the sunlight at her bows; and we hear the calling of the sea-swallows, and the throbbing of a steamer somewhere in among

the shadows of Loch Aline. Surely now we are out of the reign of calms; the great boom strains at the sheets; there is a whirl of blue waters; the *White Dove* has spread her wings at last.

"Ay, ay," says John of Skye, who has relieved Miss Avon at the helm; "it is a great peety."

"Why, John?" says she, with some surprise; is he vexed that we should be sailing well on this fine sailing day?

"It iss a great peety that Mr. Sutherland not here," said John, "and he wass know so much about a yacht, and day after day not a breeze at ahl. There iss not many chentlemen will know so much about a yacht as Mr. Sutherland."

Miss Avon did not answer, though her face seemed conscious in its colour. She was deeply engaged in a novel.

"Oh, that is the Mr. Sutherland who has been with you," said Howard Smith to his hostess, in a cheerful way. "A doctor, I think you said?"

At this Miss Avon looked up quickly from her book.

"I should have thought," said she with a certain dignity of manner, "that most people had heard of Dr. Angus Sutherland."

"Oh, yes, no doubt," said he, in the most good-natured fashion. "I know about him myself—it must be the same man. A nephew of Lord Foyers, isn't he? I met some friends of his at a house last winter; they had his book with them—the book about tiger-hunting in Nepaul, don't you know?—very interesting indeed it was, uncommonly interesting. I read it right through one night when everybody else was in bed——"

"Why, that is Captain Sutherland's book," said his hostess, with just a trace of annoyance. "They are not even related. How can you imagine that Angus Sutherland would write a book about tiger-hunting?—he is one of the most distinguished men of science in England."

"Oh, indeed," says the young man, with

the most imperturbable good humour. "Oh, yes, I am sure I have heard of him—the Geographical Society, or something like that; really those evenings are most amusing. The women are awfully bored, and yet they do keep their eyes open somehow. But about those Indian fellows; it was only last winter that I heard how the —— —— manages to make those enormous bags, all to his own gun, that you see in the papers. Haven't you noticed them?"

Well, some of us had been struck with amazement by the reports of the enormous slaughter committed by a certain Indian prince; and had wondered at one of the gentle natives of the East taking so thoroughly and successfully to our robust English sports.

"Why," said this young man, "he has every covert laid out with netting, in small squares like a dice-board; and when he has done blazing away in the air, the under-keepers come up and catch every pheasant, hare, and rabbit that has run into the netting, and kill

them, and put them down to his bag. Ingenious, isn't it? But I'll tell you what I have seen myself. I have seen Lord Justice —— deliberately walk down a line of netting and shoot every pheasant and rabbit that had got entangled. 'Safer not to let them get away,' says he. And when his host came up he said, 'Very good shooting; capital. I have got four pheasants and seven rabbits there; I suppose the beaters will pick them up.'"

And so the Youth, as we had got to call him, rattled on, relating his personal experiences, and telling such stories as occurred to him. There was a good sprinkling of well-known names in this desultory talk; how could Miss Avon fail to be interested, even if the subject-matter was chiefly composed of pheasant-shooting, private theatricals, billiard matches on wet days, and the other amusements of country life?

The Laird, when he did turn aside from that huge volume of *Municipal London*—which he had brought with him for purposes of edifica-

tion—must have seen and approved. If the young man's attentions to Mary Avon were of a distinctly friendly sort, if they were characterised by an obvious frankness, if they were quite as much at the disposal of Mr. Smith's hostess, what more could be expected? Rome was not built in a day. Meanwhile Miss Avon seemed very well pleased with her new companion.

And if it may have occurred to one or other of us that Howard Smith's talking, however pleasant and good-natured and bright, was on a somewhat lower level than that of another of our friends, what then? Was it not better fitted for idle sailing among summer seas? Now, indeed, our good friend the Laird had no need to fear being startled by the sudden propounding of conundrums.

He was startled by something else. Coming up from luncheon, we found that an extraordinary darkness prevailed in the western heavens—a strange bronze-purple gloom that seemed to contain within it the promise of a

hundred thunderstorms. And as this fair wind had now brought us within sight of the open Atlantic, the question was whether we should make for Skye or run right under this lurid mass of cloud that appeared to lie all along the western shores of Mull. Unanimously the vote was for the latter course. Had not Angus Sutherland been anxious all along to witness a thunderstorm at sea? Might it not be of inestimable value to Miss Avon? John of Skye, not understanding these reasons, pointed out that the wind had backed somewhat to the north, and that Mull would give us surer shelter than Skye for the night. And so we bore away past Quinish, the brisk breeze sending the *White Dove* along in capital style; past the mouth of Loch Cuan; past the wild Cailleach Point; past the broad Calgary Bay; and past the long headland of Ru-Treshanish. It was a strange afternoon. The sun was hidden; but in the south and west there was a wan, clear, silver glow on the sea; and in this white light the islands of Lunga, and

Fladda, and Staffa, and the Dutchman were of sombre purple. Darker still were the islands lying towards the land—Gometra, and Ulva, and Inch Kenneth; while the great rampart of cliff from Loch-na-Keal to Loch Scridain was so wrapped in gloom that momentarily we watched for the first quivering flash of the lightning. Then the wind died away. The sea grew calm. On the glassy grey surface the first drops of the rain fell—striking black, and then widening out in small circles. We were glad of the cool rain, but the whispering of it sounded strangely in the silence.

Then, as we are still watching for the first silver-blue flash of the lightning, behold! the mighty black wall of the Bourg and Gribun cliffs slowly, mysteriously disappears; and there is only before us a vague mist of grey. Colonsay is gone; Inch Kenneth is gone; no longer can we make out the dark rocks of Erisgeir. And then the whispering of the sea increases; there is a deeper gloom over

head; the rain-king is upon us! There is a hasty retreat down stairs; the hatches are shoved over; after dinner we shall see what this strange evening portends.

"I hope we shall get into the Sound of Ulva before dark," says Miss Avon.

"I wish Angus was on board. It is a shame he should be cheated out of his thunderstorm. But we shall have the equinoctials for him, at all events," says Queen Titania—just as if she had a series of squalls and tempests bottled, labelled, and put on a shelf.

When we get on deck again we find that the evening, but not the *White Dove*, has advanced. There is no wind; there is no rain; around us there is the silent, glassy, lilac-grey sea, which, far away in the west, has one or two gleams of a dull bronze on it, as if some afterglow were struggling through the clouds at the horizon. Along the Gribun cliffs, and over the islands, the gloom has surely increased; it were better if we were in some shelter for this night.

Then a noise is heard that seems to impose a sudden silence—thunder, low, distant, and rumbling. But there is no splendid gleam through the gathering gloom of the night: the Gribun cliffs have not spoken yet.

John of Skye has carelessly seated himself on one of the deck-stools; his arm hangs idly on the tiller; we guess, rather than hear, that he is regaling himself with the sad, monotonous *Farewell to Fuineray*. He has got on his black oilskins, though there is not a drop of rain.

By and by, however, it being now quite dark, he jumps to his feet, and appears to listen intently.

"Ay, do ye hear it?" he says, with a short laugh. "And it iss off the land it iss coming!"

He calls aloud—"Look out boys! it is a squahl coming over, and we'll hev the topsail down whatever!"

Then we hear a distant roaring; and presently the headsails are violently shaken, and

the great boom swings over as John puts the helm up to get way on her. The next instant we are racing in for the land, as if we mean to challenge the heavy squall that is tearing across from the unseen Gribun cliffs. And now the rain-clouds break in deluges; the men in their black oilskins go staggering this way and that along the slippery decks; the *White Dove* is wrestling with the sudden storm; another low murmur of thunder comes booming through the darkness. What is that solitary light far in there towards the land?—dare any steamer venture so near the shore on such a night? And we, too; would it not be safer for us to turn and run out to sea rather than beat against a squall into the narrow and shallow channels of Ulva's Sound? But John of Skye is not afraid. The wind and sea cannot drown his strident voice; the rain deluge cannot blind the trained eyes; the men on the look-out—when the bow of the boat springs high on a wave, we can see the black figures against the sombre sky—know

the channels too; we are not afraid to make for Ulva's Sound.

There is a wild cry from one of the women; she has caught sight, through the gloom, of white foam dashing on the rocks.

"It is all right, mem!" John calls aloud, with a laugh; but all the same the order is shouted, "*Ready about!*"—"*Ready about!*" is the call coming back to us from the darkness. "*'Bout ship!*" and then away she sheers from that ugly coast.

We were after all cheated of our thunderstorm, but it was a wild and a wet night nevertheless. Taking in the mizen was no joke amid this fury of wind and rain, but that and the hauling up of the main-tack lessened the pressure on her. John of Skye was in high spirits. He was proud of his knowledge of the dangerous coast; where less familiar eyes saw only vague black masses looming out of the darkness he recognised every rock and headland.

"No, no, mem," he was calling out in friendly

tones; "we not hef to run out to sea at ahl. We will get into the Sound of Ulva ferry well; and there will not be any better anchorage as the Sound of Ulva, when you are acquaint. But a stranger—I not ask a stranger to go into the Sound of Ulva on so dark a night."

What is this we hear?—"*Down foresail, boys!*" and there is a rattle on to the decks. The head of the yacht seems to sway round; there is a loud flapping of sails. "*Down chub!*"—and there are black figures struggling up there at the bowsprit; but vaguely seen against the blackness of the sky and the sea. Then, in a second or two, there is a fiercer rattle than ever; the anchor is away with a roar. Some further chain is paid out; then a strange silence ensues; we are anchored in Ulva's Sound.

Come down into the cabin, then, you women-folk, and dry your streaming faces, and arrange your dishevelled hair. Is not this a wonderful stillness and silence after the whirl and roar of the storm outside? But then you

must know that the waters are smooth in here; and the winds become gentle—as gentle as the name of the island that is close to us now in the dark. It is a green-shored island. The sailors call it *Ool-a-va*.

CHAPTER V.

CHASING SEALS.

NEXT morning found the Laird in a most excellent humour. All was going well. Though nothing had been said or promised by the Youth, was not his coming away with us into these remote solitudes—to say nothing of the very pleasant manner in which he sought to entertain Miss Mary Avon—sufficient evidence that he had at least no great repugnance to his uncle's scheme? The Laird was disposed to chuckle privately over the anxiety that Mary displayed about her work. The poor young thing: she did not understand what higher powers were ordering her future for her.

"Let her work on," the Laird said, in great

confidence, to his hostess, and there was a fine secret humour in his eyes. "Ay, ay, let her work on: hard work never harmed anybody. And if she brings her bit mailin to the marriage—ye would call it her dowry in the south—in the shape of a bundle of pictures—just as a young Scotch lass brings a chest of drawers or a set of napery—she will not be empty-handed. She can hang them up herself at Denny-mains"

"You are looking too far ahead, sir," says Queen T., with a quiet smile.

"Maybe—maybe," says the Laird, rubbing his hands with a certain proud satisfaction. "We'll see who's right—we will see who is right, ma'am."

Then, at breakfast, he was merry, complaisant, philosophical in turns. He told us that the last vidimus of the affairs of the Burgh of Strathgovan was most satisfactory: assets about 35,000*l.*; liabilities not over 20,000*l.*; there was thus an estimated surplus of no less than 15,000*l.* Why, then, he asked,

should certain poor creatures on the Finance Committee make such a work about the merest trifles? Life was not given to man that he should worry himself into a rage about a penny farthing.

"There is a great dale of right down common sense, ma'am," said he, "in that verse that was written by my countryman, Welliam Dunbaur—

> Be merry man, and tak not sair in mind
> The wavering of this wretched world of sorrow;
> To God be humble, to thy friend be kind,
> And with thy neighbours gladly lend and borrow;
> His chance to-night, it may be thine to-morrow;
> Be blythe in heart for any aventúre,
> For oft with wise men it has been said aforow,
> Without Gladnésse availeth no Treasúre."

But we, who were in the secret, knew that this quotation had nothing in the world to do with the Finance Committee of Strathgovan. The Laird had been comforting himself with these lines. They were a sort of philosophico-poetical justification of himself to himself for

his readiness to make these two young people happy by giving up to them Denny-mains.

And no doubt he was still chuckling over the simplicity of this poor girl, when, after breakfast, he found her busily engaged in getting her painting materials on deck.

"Beautiful — beautiful," said he, glancing around. "Ye will make a fine picture out of those mountains, and the mist, and the still sea. What an extraordinary quiet after last night's rain!"

And perhaps he was thinking how well this picture would look in the dining-room at Denny-mains; and how a certain young hostess—no longer pale and fragile, but robust and sun-browned with much driving in a pony-carriage—would take her friends to the picture, and show them Ulva, and Loch-na-Keal, and Ben-More; and tell them how this strange quiet and beauty had followed on a wild night of storm and rain. The world around us was at this moment so quiet that we could hear the twittering of some small bird among the

rocks in there at the shore. And the pale, wan, dream-like sea was so perfect a mirror that an absolutely double picture was produced —of the gloomy mountain-masses of Ben-More, amid silver gleams of cloud and motionless wreaths of mist; of the basaltic pillars of the coast nearer at hand—a pale reddish-brown, with here and there a scant sprinkling of grass; of that broad belt of rich orange-yellow seaweed that ran all along the rocks, marking the junction of the world of the land with the water-world below. An absolutely perfect mirror; except when some fish splashed; then the small circles widened out and gradually disappeared; and the surface was as glassy as before.

The Laird was generous. He would leave the artist undisturbed at her work. Would not his nephew be better amused if a bachelor expedition were fitted out to go in search of the seals that abound in the channels around Inch Kenneth? Our hostess declined to go; but provided us with an ample lunch. The

gig was lowered; and everything ready for the start.

"Bring your shot-gun, too, Howard," said the Laird. "I want ye to shoot some skarts. I am told that the breasts of them are very close and fine in the feathers; and I would like a muff or a bag made of them for a leddy—for a young leddy."

Mary Avon was busy with her work: how could she hear?

"And if the skin of the seals about here is not very fine, we will make something of it. Oh, ay, we will make something of it in the way of a present. I know a man in Glasgow who is extraordinary clever at such things."

"We have first to get the seal, uncle," said his nephew, laughing. "I know any number of men who assure you they have shot seals; but not quite so many who have got the seals that were shot."

"Oh, but we'll get the seal, and the skarts, too," said the Laird; and then he added, grimly, "Man, if ye cannot do that, what can

ye do? If ye cannot shoot well, what else are ye fit for?"

"I really don't know, uncle," the Youth confessed modestly, as he handed down his rifle into the gig. "The London solicitors are a blind race. If they only knew what a treasure of learning and sound judgment they might have for the asking: but they don't. And I can't get any of the Scotch business you were talking about; because my name doesn't begin with Mac."

"Well, well, we must wait, and hope for the best," said the Laird, cheerfully, as he took his seat in the stern of the gig. "We are not likely to run against a solicitor in the Sound of Ulva. Sufficient for the day. As I was saying, there's great common sense in what Welliam Dunbaur wrote—

> Be blythe in heart for any aventúre,
> For oft with wise men it has been said aforow,
> Without Gladnésse availeth no Treasúre.

—Bless me, look at that!"

This sudden exclamation sent all eyes to

the shore. A large heron, startled by the rattling of the oars, had risen, with a sharp and loud croak of alarm, from among the sea-weed, his legs hanging down, his long neck, and wings, and body apparently a grey-white against the shadow of the basaltic rocks. Then, lazily flapping, he rose higher and higher; he tucked up his legs; the great wings went somewhat more swiftly; and then, getting above the low cliffs, and appearing quite black against the silver-clear sky, he slowly sailed away.

The silence of this dream-like picture around us was soon broken. As the men pulled away from the yacht, the lonely shores seemed to waken up into life; and there were whistlings, and callings, and warnings all along the cliffs; while the startled sea-birds whirred by in flashes of colour, or slowly and heavily betook themselves to some further promontory. And now, as we passed along the narrow Sound, and saw through the translucent water the wonder-land of seaweed below — with the

patches of clear yellow sand intervening—we appreciated more and more highly the skill of John of Skye in getting us into such a harbour on the previous night. It is not every one who, in pitch darkness and in the midst of squalls, can run a yacht into the neck of a bottle.

We emerged from the narrow channel, and got out into the open; but even the broad waters of Loch-na-Keal were pale and still: the reflection of Eorsa was scarcely marred by a ripple. The long, measured throb of the rowing was the only sound of life in this world of still water and overhanging cloud. There was no stroke-oar now to give the chorus

A long strong pull together,
Ho, ro, clansman.

But still we made good way. As we got further out, we came in sight of Little Colonsay; and further off still, Staffa, lying like a dark cloud on the grey sea. Inch Kenneth, for which we were making, seemed almost black;

although, among the mists that lay along the Gribun and Bourg cliffs, there was a dull silver-yellow light, as though some sunlight had got mixed up with the clouds.

"No, no," the Laird was saying, as he studied a scrap of paper, "it is not a great property to admeenister; but I am strong in favour of local management. After reading that book on London, and its catalogue of the enormous properties there, our little bit Burgh appears to be only a toy; but the principle of sound and energetic self-government is the same. And yet it is no so small, mind ye. The Burgh buildings are estimated at nineteen thousand pounds odd; the furniture at twelve hunderd pounds; lamps near on two thousand five hunderd; sewers nine thousand pounds odd; and then debts not far from three thousand pounds—that makes our assets just about thirty-five thousand. And if the water-pipes in some places are rather too small for the steam fire-engine, we maun have them bigger. It was quite rideeculous that a thriving

place like Strathgovan, when there was a big fire, should have to run to Glesca for help. No, no ; I believe in independence ; and if ye should ever live in our neighbourhood, Howard, I hope ye will stand out against the policy of annexation. It is only a lot o' Radical bodies that are for upsetting institutions that have been tried by time and not found wanting."

"Oh, certainly, sir," Howard Smith said blithely. "When you educate people to take an interest in small parochial matters, they are better fitted to give an opinion about the general affairs of the country."

"Small?" said the Laird, eyeing him severely. "They are of as much importance as human life; is there anything of greater importance in the world? By abolishin' the Coulterburn nuisance, and insisting on greater cleanliness and ventilation, we have reduced the number of deaths from infectious diseases in a most extraordinar' manner ; and there will be no more fear of accidents in the Mitherdrum Road, for we are going to have a

conteenuous line of lamps that'll go right in to the Glesca lamps. I do not call these small matters. As for the asphalting of the pavement in front of John Anderson's line of houses," continued the Laird, as he consulted the memorandum in his hand, "that is a small matter, if ye like. I am not disposed to pronounce an opinion on that matter: they can settle it without my voice. But it will make a great difference to John Anderson; and I would like to see him come forward with a bigger subscription for the new Park. Well, well; we must fight through as best we can."

It was here suggested to the Laird that he should not let these weighty matters trouble him while he is away on a holiday.

"Trouble me?" said he, lightly. "Not a bit, man! People who have to meddle in public affairs must learn how to throw off their cares. I am not troubled. I am going to give the men a dram; for better pulling I never saw in a boat!"

He was as good as his word, too. He

had the luncheon-basket handed down from the bow; he got out the whisky bottle; there was a glass filled out for each of the men, which was drunk in solemn silence.

"Now, boys," said he, as they took to their oars again, "haven't ye got a song or a chorus to make the rowing easy?"

But they were too shy for a bit. Presently, however, we heard at the bow a low, plaintive, querulous voice; and the very oars seemed to recognise the air as they gripped the water. Then there was a hum of a chorus—not very musical—and it was in the Gaelic—but we knew what the refrain meant.

Ō bōatmān, ă fārewĕll tō yŏu,
Ō bōatmān, ă fārewĕll tō yŏu,
Whĕrēvēr yŏu māy bĕ gōĭng.

That is something like the English of it: we had heard the *Fhir a Bhata* in other days.

The long, heavy pull is nearly over. Here are the low-lying reefs of rock outside Inch Kenneth; not a whisper is permissible as we creep into the nearest bay. And then the

men and the boat are left there; and the Youth — perhaps dimly conscious that his uncle means the seal-skin for Mary Avon— grasps his rifle and steals away over the undulating shelves of rock; while his two companions, with more leisure but with not less circumspection, follow to observe his operations. Fortunately there is no screaming sea-pyot or whistling curlew to give warning; stealthily, almost bent in two, occasionally crawling on all fours, he makes his way along the crannies in the reef, until, as we see, he must be nearly approaching the channel on his left. There he pauses to take breath. He creeps behind a rock; and cautiously looks over. He continues his progress.

"This is terrible woark," says the Laird, in a stage-whisper, as he, too—with a much heavier bulk to carry—worms along. From time to time he has to stay to apply his handkerchief to his forehead; it is hot work on this still, breathless day.

And at last we, too, get down to the edge

of a channel—some hundred yards lower than Howard Smith's post—and from behind a rock we have a pretty clear view of the scene of operations. Apparently there is no sign of any living thing—except that a big fish leaps into the air, some dozen yards off. Thereafter a dead silence.

After waiting about a quarter of an hour or so, the Laird seemed to become violently excited, though he would neither budge nor speak. And there, between two islands right opposite young Smith, appeared two shining black heads on the still water; and they were evidently coming down this very channel. On they came—turning about one way and another, as if to look that the coast was clear. Every moment we expected to hear the crack of the rifle. Then the heads silently disappeared.

The Laird was beside himself with disappointment.

"Why did he no shoot? Why did he no shoot?" he said, in an excited whisper.

He had scarcely spoken when he was startled

by an apparition. Right opposite to him—not more than twenty yards off—a black thing appeared on the water—with a glistening smooth head, and large, soft eyes. Then another. We dared not move. We waited for the whistle of the rifle-bullet. The next instant the first seal caught sight of the Laird; raised its head for an instant at least six inches higher; then silently plunged along with its companion. They were gone, at all events.

The Youth came marching along the rocks, his rifle over his shoulder.

"Why didn't you fire?" his uncle said, almost angrily.

"I thought they were coming nearer," said he. "I was just about to fire when they dived. Mind, it isn't very easy to get on to a thing that is bobbing about like that, with a rifle. I propose we have luncheon, now, until the tide ebbs a bit; then there may be a chance of catching one lying on the rocks. That is the proper time for getting a shot at a seal."

We had luncheon: there was no difficulty about securing that. But as for getting at the seals—whether we crawled over the rocks, or lay in hiding, or allowed the boat to drift towards some island, on the chance of one of them rising in our neighbourhood—it was no use at all. There were plenty of seals about: a snap shot now and again served to break the monotony of the day; but that present for Mary Avon seemed as remote as ever. And when one is determined on shooting a seal, one is not likely to waste one's attention, and cartridges, on such inferior animals as skarts.

The silver-grey day became more golden; there was a touch of warm purple about the shadows of Staffa.

"Come," said the Laird at last. "We must go back. It is no use. I have often heard people say that if you miss the first chance at a seal it never gives ye another."

"Better luck next time, uncle," said the Youth; but his uncle refused to be comforted.

And the first thing he said to Mary Avon when he got back to the yacht was—

"We have not got it."

"Got what?" said she.

"The seal-skin I wanted to have dressed for ye. No, nor the skarts I wanted to have made into a muff or a bag for ye."

"Oh," said she, promptly, "I am very glad. I hope you won't shoot any of those poor things on my account; I should be very sorry indeed."

The Laird took this as one of the familiar protestations on the part of women, who wouldn't for the world have poor things shot, but who don't object to wearing any amount of furs and feathers, to say nothing of having innocent sheep sheared and harmless silk-worms robbed in order to deck themselves out. She should have that dressed seal-skin, and that muff of skarts' breasts, all the same.

Nothing of stupendous importance happened that evening except that—after we had caught three dozen of good-sized lithe and returned

to the yacht with this welcome addition to our stores—there was a general discussion of our plans for the next few days. And our gentle hostess was obviously looking forward to Angus Sutherland's coming back to us with great pleasure; and we were to make our return to suit his convenience; and she would write to him whenever we got near a post-office again.

Mary Avon had sate silent during all this. At last, she said—apparently with some effort and yet very deliberately—

"I—I think you are a little cruel to Dr. Sutherland. You are forcing him to come with you against his better judgment—for you know, with his prospects, and the calls on his time, he cannot afford such long idleness. Do you think it is quite fair?"

The woman stared at this girl, who spoke with some earnestness, though her eyes were downcast.

"He would do anything to please you," Mary Avon continued, as if she were

determined to get through with some speech that she had prepared, "and he is very fond of sailing: but do you think you should allow him to injure his prospects in this way? Wouldn't it be a greater kindness to write and say that, if he really feels he ought to return to London, you would not hold him to his promise? I am sure he would not be offended: he would understand you at once. And I am sure he would do what is clearly right: he would go straight back to London, and resume his work—for his own sake and for the sake of those who count on a great future for him. I, for one, should be very sorry to see him come back to idle away his time in sailing."

And still Queen Tita stared at the girl, though their eyes did not meet. And she could scarcely believe that it was Mary Avon who had counselled this cold dismissal.

CHAPTER VI.

"UNCERTAIN, COY, AND HARD TO PLEASE."

THERE are two people walking up and down the deck this beautiful morning: the lazy ones are still below, dawdling over breakfast. And now young Smith, though he is not much more than an acquaintance, talks quite confidentially to his hostess. She has his secret; he looks to her for aid. And when they do have a quiet moment like this together there is usually but one person of whom they speak.

"I must say she has an extraordinary spirit," he observes, with some decision. "Why, I believe she is rather pleased than otherwise to have lost that money. She is not a bit afraid of going up to London to support herself by her work. It seems to amuse her on the whole!"

"Mary has plenty of courage," says the other quietly.

"I don't wonder at my uncle being so fond of her: he likes her independent ways and her good humour. I shouldn't be surprised if he were to adopt her as his daughter, and cut me out. There would be some sense in that."

"I am glad you take it so coolly," says our governor-general, in a matter-of-fact way that rather startles him. "More unlikely things have happened."

But he recovers himself directly.

"No, no," says he, laughing. "There is one objection. She could not sit on any of the parochial Boards of Strathgovan. Now I know my uncle looks forward to putting me on the Police Committee and the Lighting Committee, and no end of other Committees. By the way, she might go on the School Board. Do they have women on the School Boards in Scotland?"

On this point his hostess was no better informed than himself.

"Well," said he, after a bit, "I wouldn't call her pretty, you know; but she has a singularly interesting face."

"Oh, do you think so?" says the other, quite innocently.

"I do, indeed," answers the ingenuous Youth. "And the more you see of her the more interesting it becomes. You seem to get so well acquainted with her somehow; and—and you have a sort of feeling that her presence is sort of necessary."

This was somewhat vague; but he made another wild effort to express himself.

"What I mean is—that—that suppose she were to leave the yacht, wouldn't the saloon look quite different? And wouldn't the sailing be quite different? You would know there was something wanting."

"I should, indeed," is the emphatic reply.

"I never knew any one," says the Youth, warming to his work of thorough explanation, "about whose presence you seem so conscious—even when she isn't here—I don't mean

that exactly—I mean that at this moment now, you know she is on board the yacht—and it would be quite different if she were not. I suppose most people wouldn't call her pretty. There is nothing of the Book of Beauty about her. But I call it a most interesting face. And she has fine eyes. Anybody must admit that. They have a beautiful, soft expression; and they can laugh even when she is quite silent——"

"My dear Mr. Smith," says his hostess, suddenly stopping short, and with a kind of serious smile on her face, "let me talk frankly to you. You acted very sensibly, I think, in coming with us to humour your uncle. He will come to see that this scheme of his is impracticable; and in the meantime, if you don't mind the discomfort of it, you have a holiday. That is all quite well. But pray don't think it necessary that you should argue yourself into falling in love with Mary. I am not in her confidence on such a delicate matter; but one has eyes; and I think I might almost

safely say to you that, even if you persuaded yourself that Mary would make an excellent wife—and be presentable to your friends—I say even if you succeeded in persuading yourself, I am afraid you would only have thrown that labour away. Please don't try to convince yourself that you ought to fall in love with her."

This was plain speaking. But then our admiral-in-chief was very quickly sensitive where Mary Avon was concerned; and perhaps she did not quite like her friend being spoken of as though she were a pill that had to be swallowed. Of course the Youth instantly disclaimed any intention of that kind. He had a very sincere regard for the girl, so far as he had seen her; he was not persuading himself; he was only saying how much she improved when you got better acquainted with her.

"And if," said he, with just a touch of dignity, "if Miss Avon is—is—engaged——"

"Oh, I did not say that," his hostess quickly interposed. "Oh, certainly not. It was only a guess on my part——"

"—— or likely to be engaged," he continued, with something of the same reserve, "I am sure I am very glad for her sake; and whoever marries her ought to have a cheerful home and a pleasant companion."

This was a generous sentiment; but there was not much of a "wish-you-may-be-happy" air about the young man. Moreover, where was the relief he ought to have experienced on hearing that there was an obstacle—or likelihood of an obstacle— to the execution of his uncle's scheme which would absolve him from responsibility altogether?

However, the subject could not be continued just then; for at this moment a tightly-brushed small head, and a narrow-brimmed felt hat, and a shapely neck surrounded by an upstanding collar and bit of ribbon of navy-blue, appeared at the top of the companion, and Mary Avon, looking up with her black eyes full of a cheerful friendliness, said—

"Well, John, are you ready to start yet?"

And the great, brown-bearded John of Skye,

looking down at this small Jack-in-the-box with a smile of welcome on his face, said—

"Oh, yes, mem, when the breakfast is over."

"Do you think it is blowing outside, then?"

"Oh, no, mem, but there is a good breeze; and maybe there will be a bit of a rowl from the Atlantic. Will Mr. —— himself be for going now?"

"Oh, yes, certainly," she says, with a fine assumption of authority. "We are quite ready when you are ready, John; Fred will have the things off the table in a couple of minutes."

"Very well, mem," says the obedient John of Skye, going forward to get the men up to the windlass.

Our young Doctor should have been there to see us getting under way. The Sound of Ulva is an excellent harbour and anchorage when you are once in it; but getting out of it, unless with both wind and tide in your favour, is very like trying to manœuvre a man-of-war in a tea-cup. But we had long ago come to

the conclusion that John of Skye could sail the *White Dove* through a gas-pipe, with half a gale of wind dead in his teeth; and the manner in which he got us out of this narrow and tortuous channel fully justified our confidence.

"Very prettily done, Captain John!" said the Laird—who was beginning to give himself airs on nautical matters—when we had got out into the open.

And here, as we soon discovered, was the brisk fresh breeze that John of Skye had predicted; and the running swell, too, that came sweeping in to the mouth of Loch-na-Keal. Black indeed looked that far-reaching loch on this breezy, changeful morning—as dark as it was when the chief of Ulva's Isle came down to the shore with his runaway bride; and all along Ben-More and over the Gribun cliffs hung heavy masses of cloud, dark and threatening as if with thunder. But far away in the south there was a more cheerful outlook; the windy sea shimmering in light; some gleams of blue in the sky; we knew that

the sunshine must be shining on the green clover and the beautiful sands of Iona. The *White Dove* seemed to understand what was required of her. Her head was set for the gleaming south; her white wings outspread; as she sprang to meet those rushing seas we knew we were escaping from the thunder-darkness that lay over Loch-na-Keal.

And Ulva: had we known that we were now leaving Ulva behind us for the last time, should we not have taken another look back, even though it now lay under a strange and mysterious gloom? Perhaps not. We had grown to love the island in other days. And when one shuts one's eyes in winter, it is not to see an Ulva of desolate rocks and leaden waves; it is a fair and shining Ulva, with blue seas breaking whitely along its shores; and magical still channels, with mermaid's halls of seaweed; and an abundant, interesting life—all manner of sea-birds, black rabbits running among the rocks, seals swimming in the silent bays. Then the patch of civilisation under

shelter of the hills; the yellow corn-fields; the dots of human creatures and the red and tawny-grey cattle visible afar in the meadow; the solitary house; the soft foliage of trees and bushes; the wild-flowers along the cliffs. That is the green-shored island: that is the *Ool-a-va* of the sailors; we know it only in sunlight and among blue summer seas: it shines for us for ever!

The people who go yachting are a fickle folk. The scene changes—and their interests change—every few minutes. Now it is the swooping down of a solan; again it is the appearance of another island far away; presently it is a shout of laughter forward, as some unlucky wight gets drowned in a shower of sea-spray: anything catches their attention for the moment. And so the *White Dove* swings along; and the sea gets heavier and heavier; and we watch the breakers springing high over the black rocks of Colonsay. It is the Laird who is now instructing our new guest; pointing out to him, as they come

in view, Staffa, the Dutchman, Fladda, and Lunga, and Cairnaburg. Tiree is invisible at the horizon: there is too wild a whirl of wind and water.

The gloom behind us increases; we know not what is about to happen to our beloved but now distant Ulva—what sudden rumble of thunder is about to startle the silence of the dark Loch-na-Keal. But ahead of us the south is still shining clear: blow, winds, that we may gain the quiet shelter of Polterriv before the evening falls! And is it not full moon to-night?—to-night our new guest may see the yellow moon shining on the still waters of Iona Sound.

But the humiliating truth must be told. The heavy sea has been trying to one unaccustomed to life on board. Howard Smith, though answering questions well enough, and even joining voluntarily in conversation occasionally, wears a preoccupied air. He does not take much interest in the caves of Bourg. The bright look has gone from his face.

His gentle hostess—who has herself had moments of gloom on the bosom of the deep—recognises these signs instantly; and insists on immediate luncheon. There is a double reason for this haste. We can now run under the lee of the Erisgeir rocks, where there will be less danger to Master Fred's plates and tumblers. So we are all bundled down into the saloon; the swell sensibly subsides as we get to leeward of Erisgeir; there is a scramble of helping and handing; and another explosion in the galley tells us that Master Fred has not yet mastered the art of releasing effervescing fluids. Half a tumblerful of that liquid puts new life into our solemn friend. The colour returns to his face, and brightness to his eyes. He admits that he was beginning to long for a few minutes on firm land—but now—but now—he is even willing to join us in an excursion that has been talked of to the far Dubhartach lighthouse.

"But we must really wait for Angus," our hostess says, "before going out there.

He was always so anxious to go to Dubhartach."

"But surely you won't ask him to come away from his duties again?" Mary Avon puts in hastily. "You know he ought to go back to London at once."

"I know I have written him a letter," says the other demurely. "You can read it if you like, Mary. It is in pencil, for I was afraid of the ink-bottle going waltzing over the table."

Miss Avon would not read the letter. She said we must be past Erisgeir by this time; and proposed we should go on deck. This we did; and the Youth was now so comfortable and assured in his mind that, by lying full length on the deck, close to the weather bulwarks, he managed to light a cigar. He smoked there in much content, almost safe from the spray.

Mary Avon was seated at the top of the companion, reading. Her hostess came and squeezed herself in beside her, and put her arm round her.

"Mary," said she, "why don't you want Angus Sutherland to come back to the yacht?"

"I!" said she, in great surprise—though she did not meet the look of the elder woman —"I—I—don't you see yourself that he ought to go back to London? How can he look after that magazine while he is away in the Highlands? And—and—he has so much to look forward to—so much to do—that you should not encourage him in making light of his work."

"Making light of his work!" said the other. "I am almost sure that you yourself told him that he deserved and required a long—a very long—holiday."

"You did, certainly."

"And didn't you?"

The young lady looked rather embarrassed.

"When you saw him," said she, with flushed cheeks, "so greatly enjoying the sailing—absorbed in it—and—and gaining health and strength, too—well, of course you naturally

wished that he should come back and go away with you again. But it is different on reflection. You should not ask him."

"Why, what evil is likely to happen to him through taking another six weeks' holiday? Is he likely to fall out of the race of life because of a sail in the *White Dove*? And doesn't he know his own business? He is not a child."

"He would do a great deal to please you."

"I want him to please himself," said the other; and she added, with a deadly frown gathering on her forehead, "and I won't have you, Miss Dignity, interfering with the pleasures of my guests. And there is to be no snubbing, and no grim looks, and no hints about work, and London, and other nonsense, when Angus Sutherland comes back to us. You shall stand by the gangway—do you hear?—and receive him with a smiling face; and if you are not particularly kind, and civil, and attentive to him, I'll have you lashed to

the yard-arm and painted blue—keel-haul me if I don't."

Fairer and fairer grew the scene around us as the brave *White Dove* went breasting the heavy Atlantic rollers. Blue and white overhead; the hot sunlight doing its best to dry the dripping decks; Iona shining there over the smoother waters of the Sound; the sea breaking white, and spouting up in columns, as it dashed against the pale red promontories of the Ross of Mull. But then this stiff breeze had backed to the west; and there was many a long tack to be got over before we left behind the Atlantic swell and ran clear into the Sound. The evening was drawing on apace as we slowly and cautiously steered into the little creek of Polterriv. No sooner had the anchor rattled out than we heard the clear tinkling of Master Fred's bell; how on earth had he managed to cook dinner amid all that diving and rolling and pitching?

And then, as we had hoped, it was a beautiful evening; and the long gig was got out, and

shawls for the women-folk flung into the stern. The fishing did not claim our attention. Familiar as some of us were with the wonderful twilights of the north, which of us had ever seen anything more solemn, and still, and lovely than these colours of sea and shore? Half-past nine at night on the 8th of August; and still the west and north were flushed with a pale rose-red, behind the dark, rich, olive-green of the shadowed Iona. But what was that to the magic world that lay before us as we returned to the yacht? Now the moon had arisen, and it seemed to be of a clear, lambent gold; and the cloudless heavens and the still sea were of a violet hue—not imaginatively, or relatively, but positively and literally violet. Then between the violet-coloured sky and the violet-coloured sea, a long line of rock, jet black as it appeared to us. That was all the picture: the yellow moon, the violet sky, the violet sea, the line of black rock. No doubt it was the intensity of the shadows along this line of rock that gave

that extraordinary luminousness to the still heavens and the still sea.

When we got back to the yacht a telegram awaited us. It had been sent to Bunessan, the nearest telegraph-station; but some kind friends there, recognising the *White Dove* as she came along by Erisgeir, and shrewdly concluding that we must pass the night at Polterriv, had been so kind as to forward it on to Fion-phort by a messenger.

"I thought so!" says Queen T. with a fine delight in her face as she reads the telegram. "It is from Angus. He is coming on Thursday. We must go back to meet him at Ballahulish or Corpach."

Then the discourtesy of this remark struck her.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Smith," said she, instantly. "Of course, I mean if it is quite agreeable to you. He does not expect us, you see; he would come on here——"

"I assure you I would as soon go to Ballahulish as anywhere else," says the

Youth promptly. "It is quite the same to me—it is all new, you see, and all equally charming."

Mary Avon alone expressed no delight at this prospect of our going to Ballahulish to meet Angus Sutherland; she sate silent; her eyes were thoughtful and distant; it was not of anything around her that she was thinking.

The moon had got whiter now; the sea and the sky blue-black in place of that soft warm violet colour. We sate on deck till a late hour; the world was asleep around us; not a sound disturbed the absolute stillness of land and sea.

And where was the voice of our singing bird? Had the loss of a mere sum of money made her forget all about Mary Beaton, and Mary Seaton, "and Mary Carmichael and me?" Or was the midnight silence too much for her; and the thought of the dusky cathedral over there; with the gravestones pale in the moonlight; and all around a whispering

of the lonely sea? She had nothing to fear. She might have crossed over to Iona and might have walked all by herself through the ruins, and in calmness regarded the sculptured stones. The dead sleep sound.

CHAPTER VII.

SECRET SCHEMES.

THE delight with which John of Skye heard that his friend Dr. Sutherland was coming back to the yacht, and that we were now setting out for Ballahulish or Corpach to meet him, found instant and practical expression on this fine, breezy, sunlit morning.

"Hector," says he, "we will put the gaff topsail on her!"

What did he care though this squally breeze came blowing down the Sound in awkward gusts?

"It is a fine wind, mem," says he to the Admiral, as we slowly leave the green waters and the pink rocks of Polterriv, and get into the open and breezy channel. "Oh, we will

mek a good run the day. And I beg your pardon, mem, but it is a great pleasure to me that Mr. Sutherland himself is coming back to the yat."

"He understands your clever sailing, John: is that it?"

"He knows more about a yat as any chentleman I will ever see, mem. And we will try to get a good breeze for him this time, mem—and not to have the calm weather."

This is not likely to be a day of calm weather, at all events. Tide and wind together take us away swiftly from the little harbour behind the granite rocks. And is Iona over there all asleep; or are there some friends in the small village watching the *White Dove* bearing away to the south? We wave our handkerchiefs on chance. We take a last look at the gabled ruins over the sea; at the green corn-fields; and the scattered houses; and the beaches of silver sand. Good-bye — good-bye! It is a last look for this summer at least; perhaps it is a last

look for ever. But Iona too—as well as Ulva —remains in the memory a vision of sunlight, and smooth seas, and summer days.

Harder and harder blows this fresh breeze from the north; and we are racing down the Sound with the driven waves. But for the rope round the tiller, Miss Avon, who is steering, would find it difficult to keep her feet; and her hair is blown all about her face. The salt water comes swishing down the scuppers; the churned foam goes hissing and boiling away from the sides of the vessel; the broad Atlantic widens out. And that small grey thing at the horizon? Can that speck be a mass of masonry a hundred and fifty feet in height, wedged into the lonely rock?

"No, no," says our gentle Queen Titania with an involuntary shudder, "not for worlds would I climb up that iron ladder, with the sea and the rocks right below me. I should never get half-way up."

"They will put a rope round your waist, if you like," it is pointed out to her.

"When we go out, then," says this coward. "I will see how Mary gets on. If she does not die of fright, I may venture."

"Oh, but I don't think I shall be with you," remarks the young lady quite simply.

At this there is a general stare.

"I don't know what you mean," says her hostess, with an ominous curtness.

"Why, you know," says the girl, cheerfully —and disengaging one hand to get her hair out of her eyes—"I can't afford to go idling much longer. I must get back to London."

"Don't talk nonsense," says the other woman, angrily. "You may try to stop other people's holidays, if you like; but I am going to look after yours. Holidays! How are you to work, if you don't work now? Will you find many landscapes in Regent Street?"

"I have a great many sketches," says Mary Avon, "and I must try to make something out of them, where there is less distraction of amusement. And really, you know, you

have so many friends — would you like me to become a fixture—like the mainmast—"

"I would like you to talk a little common sense," is the sharp reply. "You are not going back to London till the *White Dove* is laid up for the winter — that is what I know."

"I am afraid I must ask you to let me off," she says, quite simply and seriously. "Suppose I go up to London next week? Then, if I get on pretty well, I may come back——"

"You may come back!" says the other with a fine contempt. "Don't try to impose on me. I am an older woman than you. And I have enough provocations and worries from other quarters: I don't want you to begin and bother."

"Is your life so full of trouble?" says the girl, innocently. "What are these fearful provocations?"

"Never mind. You will find out in time. But when you get married, Mary, don't forget to buy a copy of Doddridge on Patience.

That should be included in every bridal trousseau."

"Poor thing—is it so awfully ill-used?" replies the steersman, with much compassion.

Here John of Skye comes forward.

"If ye please, mem, I will tek the tiller until we get round the Ross. The rocks are very bad here."

"All right, John," says the young lady; and then, with much cautious clinging to various objects, she goes below, saying that she means to do a little more to a certain slight water-colour sketch of Polterriv. We know why she wants to put some further work on that hasty production. Yesterday the Laird expressed high approval of the sketch. She means him to take it with him to Dennymains, when she leaves for London.

But this heavy sea: how is the artist getting on with her work amid such pitching and diving? Now that we are round the Ross, the *White Dove* has shifted her course; the wind is more on her beam; the mainsheet has

been hauled in; and the noble ship goes ploughing along in splendid style; but how about water-colour drawing?

Suddenly, as the yacht gives a heavy lurch to leeward, an awful sound is heard below. Queen T. clambers down the companion, and holds on by the door of the saloon; the others following and looking over her shoulders. There a fearful scene appears. At the head of the table, in the regal recess usually occupied by the carver and chief president of our banquets, sits Mary Avon, in mute and blank despair. Everything has disappeared from before her. A tumbler rolls backwards and forwards on the floor, empty. A dishevelled bundle of paper, hanging on to the edge of a carpet-stool, represents what was once an orderly sketch-book. Tubes, pencils, saucers, sponges—all have gone with the table-cloth. And the artist sits quite hopeless and silent, staring before her like a maniac in a cell.

"Whatever have you been and done?" calls her hostess.

There is no answer: only that tragic despair.

"It was all bad steering," remarks the Youth. "I knew it would happen as soon as Miss Avon left the helm."

But the Laird, not confining his sympathy to words, presses by his hostess; and, holding hard by the bare table, staggers along to the scene of the wreck. The others timidly follow. One by one the various objects are rescued, and placed for safety on the couch on the leeward side of the saloon. Then the automaton in the presidential chair begins to move. She recovers her powers of speech. She says—awaking from her dream—

"Is my head on?"

"And if it is, it is not of much use to you," says her hostess, angrily. "Whatever made you have those things out in a sea like this? Come up on deck at once; and let Fred get luncheon ready."

The maniac only laughs.

"Luncheon!" she says. "Luncheon in the middle of earthquakes!"

But this sneer at the *White Dove*, because she has no swinging table, is ungenerous. Besides, is not our Friedrich d'or able to battle any pitching with his ingeniously bolstered couch—so that bottles, glasses, plates, and what not, are as safe as they would be in a case in the British Museum? A luncheon party on board the *White Dove*, when there is a heavy Atlantic swell running, is not an imposing ceremony. It would not look well as a coloured lithograph in the illustrated papers. The figures crouching on the low stools to leeward; the narrow cushion bolstered up so that the most enterprising of dishes cannot slide; the table-cover plaited so as to afford receptacles for knives and spoons; bottles and tumblers plunged into hollows and propped; Master Fred, balancing himself behind these stooping figures, bottle in hand, and ready to replenish any cautiously proffered wine-glass. But it serves. And Dr. Sutherland has assured us that, the heavier the sea, the more necessary is luncheon for the weaker vessels, who may

be timid about the effect of so much rolling and pitching. When we get on deck again, who is afraid? It is all a question as to what signal may be visible to the white house of Carsaig—shining afar there in the sunlight, among the hanging woods, and under the soft purple of the hills. Behold!—behold!—the red flag run up to the top of the white pole! Is it a message to us, or only a summons to the *Pioneer?* For now, through the whirl of wind and spray, we can make out the steamer that daily encircles Mull, bringing with it white loaves, and newspapers, and other luxuries of the mainland.

She comes nearer and nearer; the throbbing of the paddles is heard among the rush of the waves; the people crowd to the side of the boat to have a look at the passing yacht; and one well-known figure, standing on the hurricane deck, raises his gilt-braided cap,—for we happen to have on board a gentle small creature who is a great friend of his. And she waves her white handkerchief, of course; and you should

see what a fluttering of similar tokens there is all along the steamer's decks, and on the paddle boxes. Farewell!—farewell!—may you have a smooth landing at Staffa, and a pleasant sail down the Sound, in the quiet of the afternoon!

The day wears on, with puffs and squalls coming tearing over from the high cliffs of southern Mull; and still the gallant *White Dove* meets and breasts those rolling waves, and sends the spray flying from her bows. We have passed Loch Buy; Garveloch and the Island of Saints are drawing nearer; soon we shall have to bend our course northward, when we have got by Eilean-straid-ean. And whether it is that Mary Avon is secretly comforting herself with the notion that she will soon see her friends in London again, or whether it is that she is proud of being again promoted to the tiller, she has quite recovered her spirits. We hear our singing-bird once more—though it is difficult, amid the rush and swirl of the waters, to do more than catch chance phrases and refrains. And then she

is being very merry with the Laird, who is humorously decrying England and the English, and proving to her that it is the Scotch migration to the south that is the very saving of her native country.

"The Lord Chief Justice of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the President of the Royal Academy—the heads and leading men everywhere — all Scotch — all Scotch," says he.

"But the weak point about the Scotch, sir," says this philosopher in the ulster, who is clinging on to the tiller rope, "is their modesty. They are so distrustful of their own merits. And they are always running down their own country."

"Ha, ha!—ho! ho! ho!" roars the Laird. "Verra good! verra good! I owe ye one for that. I owe ye one. Howard, have ye nothing to say in defence of your native country?"

"You are speaking of Scotland, sir?"

"Ay."

"That is not my native country, you know."

"It was your mother's, then."

Somehow, when by some accident—and it but rarely happened—the Laird mentioned Howard Smith's mother, a brief silence fell on him. It lasted but a second or two. Presently he was saying, with much cheerfulness—

"No, no, I am not one of those that would promote any rivalry between Scotland and England. We are one country now. If the Scotch preserve the best leeterary English—the most pithy and characteristic forms of the language—the English that is talked in the south is the most generally received throughout the world. I have even gone the length—I'm no ashamed to admit it—of hinting to Tom Galbraith that he should exheebit more in London: the influence of such work as his should not be confined to Edinburgh. And jealous as they may be in the south of the Scotch school, they could not refuse to recognise its excellence—eh? No, no; when Galbraith likes to exheebit in London, ye'll hear a stir, I'm thinking. The jealousy of

English artists will have no effect on public opeenion. They may keep him out o' the Academy — there's many a good artist has never been within the walls—but the public is the judge. I am told that when his picture of *Stonebyres Falls* was exheebited in Edinburgh, a dealer came all the way from London to look at it."

"Did he buy it?" asked Miss Avon, gently.

"Buy it!" the Laird said, with a contemptuous laugh. "There are some of us about Glasgow who know better than to let a picture like that get to London. I bought it myself. Ye'll see it when ye come to Denny-mains. Ye have heard of it, no doubt?"

"N—no, I think not," she timidly answers.

"No matter—no matter. Ye'll see it when ye come to Denny-mains."

He seemed to take it for granted that she was going to pay a visit to Denny-mains: had he not heard, then, of her intention of at once returning to London?

Once well round into the Frith of Lorn, the

wind that had borne us down the Sound of Iona was now right ahead; and our progress was but slow. As the evening wore on, it was proposed that we should run into Loch Speliv for the night. There was no dissentient voice.

The sudden change from the plunging seas without to the quiet waters of the solitary little loch was strange enough. And then, as we slowly beat up against the northerly wind to the head of the loch—a beautiful, quiet, sheltered little cup of a harbour among the hills—we found before us, or rather over us, the splendours of a stormy sunset among the mountains above Glen More. It was a striking spectacle—the vast and silent gloom of the valleys below, which were of a cold and intense green in the shadow; then above, among the great shoulders and peaks of the hills, flashing gleams of golden light, and long swathes of purple cloud touched with scarlet along their edges, and mists of rain that came along with the wind, blotting out here and there those splendid colours. There was an absolute

silence in this overshadowed bay—but for the cry of the startled wild-fowl. There was no sign of any habitation, except perhaps a trace of pale blue smoke rising from behind a mass of trees. Away went the anchor with a short, sharp rattle; we were safe for the night.

We knew, however, what that trace of smoke indicated behind the dark trees. By and by, as soon as the gig had got to the land, there was a procession along the solitary shore—in the wan twilight—and up the rough path—and through the scattered patches of birch and fir. And were you startled, Madam, by the apparition of people who were so inconsiderate as to knock at your door in the middle of dinner, and whose eyes, grown accustomed to the shadows of the valleys of Mull, must have looked bewildered enough on meeting the glare of the lamps? And what did you think of a particular pair of eyes—very soft and gentle in their dark lustre—appealing, timid, friendly eyes, that had nevertheless a quiet happiness and humour in them? It was at all events most kind of you

to tell the young lady that her notion of throwing up her holiday and setting out for London was mere midsummer madness. How could you—or any one else—guess at the origin of so strange a wish?

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE BREAKFAST.

Who is this who slips through the saloon, while as yet all on board are asleep—who noiselessly ascends the companion-way, and then finds herself alone on deck? And all the world around her is asleep too, though the gold and rose of the new day is shining along the eastern heavens. There is not a sound in this silent little loch: the shores and the woods are as still as the far peaks of the mountains, where the mists are touched here and there with a dusky fire.

She is not afraid to be alone in this silent world. There is a bright and contented look on her face. Carefully and quietly, so as not to disturb the people below, she gets a couple

of deck stools, and puts down the large sketch-book from under her arm, and opens out a certain leather case. But do not think she is going to attack that blaze of colour in the east, with the reflected glare on the water, and the bar of dark land between. She knows better. She has a wholesome fear of chromo-lithographs. She turns rather to those great mountain masses, with their mysteriously moving clouds, and their shoulders touched here and there with a sombre red, and their deep and silent glens a cold, intense green in shadow. There is more workable material.

And after all there is no ambitious effort to trouble her. It is only a rough jotting of form and colour, for future use. It is a pleasant occupation for this still, cool, beautiful morning; and perhaps she is fairly well satisfied with it, for one listening intently might catch snatches of songs and airs—of a somewhat incoherent and inappropriate character. For what have the praises of Bonny Black Bess to do with sunrise in Loch Speliv? Or the saucy Arethusa

either? But all the same the work goes quietly and dexterously on—no wild dashes and searchings for theatrical effect, but a patient mosaic of touches precisely reaching their end. She does not want to bewilder the world. She wants to have trustworthy records for her own use. And she seems content with the progress she is making.

Here's a health to the girls that we loved long ago,

this is the last air into which she has wandered—half humming and half whistling—

Where the Shannon, and Liffey, and Blackwater flow.

—when she suddenly stops her work to listen. Can any one be up already? The noise is not repeated; and she proceeds with her work.

Here's a health to old Ireland: may she ne'er be dismayed;
Then pale grew the cheeks of the Irish Brigade!

The clouds are assuming substance now: they are no mere flat washes but accurately drawn objects that have their fore-shortening like anything else. And if Miss Avon may be vaguely conscious that had our young Doctor

been on board she would not have been left so long alone, that had nothing to with her work. The mornings on which he used to join her on deck, and chat to her while she painted, seem far away now. He and she together would see Dunvegan no more.

But who is this who most cautiously comes up the companion, bearing in his hand a cup and saucer?

"Miss Avon," says he, with a bright laugh, "here is the first cup of tea I ever made; are you afraid to try it?"

"Oh, dear me," said she, penitently, "did I make any noise in getting my things below?"

"Well," he says, "I thought I heard you; and I knew what you would be after; and I got up and lit the spirit-lamp."

"Oh, it is so very kind of you," she says—for it is really a pretty little attention on the part of one who is not much given to shifting for himself on board.

Then he dives below again and fetches her up some biscuits.

"By Jove," he says, coming closer to the sketch, "that is very good. That is awfully good. Do you mean to say you have done all that this morning?"

"Oh, yes," she says, modestly. "It is only a sketch."

"I think it uncommonly good," he says, staring at it as if he would pierce the paper.

Then there is a brief silence, during which Miss Avon boldly adventures upon this amateur's tea.

"I beg your pardon," he says, after a bit, "it is none of my business, you know—but you don't really mean that you are going back to London?"

"If I am allowed," she answers with a smile.

"I am sure you will disappoint your friends most awfully," says he, in quite an earnest manner. "I know they had quite made up their minds you were to stay the whole time. It would be very unfair of you. And my uncle: he would break his heart if you were to go."

"They are all very kind to me," was her only answer.

"Look here," he says, with a most friendly anxiety. "If—if—it is only about business—about pictures I mean — I really beg your pardon for intermeddling——"

"Oh," said she, frankly, "there is no secret about it. In fact, I want everybody to know that I am anxious to sell my pictures. You see, as I have got to earn my own living, shouldn't I begin at once and find out what it is like?"

"But look here," he said eagerly, "if it is a question of selling pictures, you should trust to my uncle. He is among a lot of men in the West of Scotland, rich merchants and people of that sort, who haven't inherited collections of pictures, and whose hobby is to make a collection for themselves. And they have much too good sense to buy spurious old masters, or bad examples for the sake of the name: they prefer good modern art, and I can tell you they are prepared to pay for it too. And they are not

fools, mind you; they know good pictures. You may think my uncle is very prejudiced—he has his favourite artists—and—and believes in Tom Galbraith, don't you know—but I can assure you, you won't find many men who know more about a good landscape than he does; and you would say so if you saw his dining room at Denny-mains."

"I quite believe that," said she, beginning to put up her materials: she had done her morning's work.

"Well," he says, "you trust to him; there are lots of those Glasgow men who would only be too glad to have the chance——"

"Oh, no, no," she cried, laughing. "I am not going to coerce people into buying my pictures for the sake of friendship. I think your uncle would buy every sketch I have on board the yacht; but I cannot allow my friends to be victimised."

"Oh, victimised!" said he, scornfully. "They ought to be glad to have the chance. And do you mean to go on giving away your

work for nothing? That sketch of the little creek we were in — opposite Iona, don't you know—that you gave my uncle, is charming. And they tell me you have given that picture of the rocks and sea-birds—where is the place?——"

"Oh, do you mean the sketch in the saloon —of Canna?"

"Yes; why it is one of the finest landscapes I ever saw. And they tell me you gave it to that doctor who was on board!"

"Dr. Sutherland," says she, hastily — and there is a quick colour in her face—"seemed to like it as — as a sort of reminiscence, you know——"

"But he should not have accepted a valuable picture," said the Youth, with decision. "No doubt you offered it to him when you saw he admired it. But now—when he must understand that—well, in fact, that circumstances are altered—he will have the good sense to give it you back again."

"Oh, I hope not," she says, with her

embarrassment not diminishing. "I—I should not like that! I—I should be vexed."

"A person of good tact and good taste," says this venturesome young man, "would make a joke of it—would insist that you never meant it—and would prefer to buy the picture."

She answers, somewhat shortly—

"I think not. I think Dr. Sutherland has as good taste as any one. He would know that that would vex me very much."

"Oh, well," says he, with a sort of carelessness, "every one to his liking. If he cares to accept so valuable a present, good and well."

"You don't suppose he asked me for it?" she says, rather warmly. "I gave it him. He would have been rude to have refused it. I was very much pleased that he cared for the picture."

"Oh, he is a judge of art, also? I am told he knows everything."

"He was kind enough to say he liked the sketch; that was enough for me."

"He is very lucky; that is all I have to say."

"I dare say he has forgotten all about such a trifle. He has more important things to think about."

"Well," said he, with a good-natured laugh, "I should not consider such a picture a trifle if any one presented it to me. But it is always the people who get everything they want who value things least."

"Do you think Dr. Sutherland such a fortunate person?" says she. "Well, he is fortunate in having great abilities; and he is fortunate in having chosen a profession that has already secured him great honour, and that promises a splendid future to him. But that is the result of hard work; and he has to work hard now. I don't think most men would like to change places with him just at present."

"He has one good friend and champion, at all events," he says, with a pleasant smile.

"Oh," says she, hastily and anxiously, "I am

saying what I hear. My acquaintance with Dr. Sutherland is—is quite recent, I may say; though I have met him in London. I only got to know something about him when he was in Edinburgh, and I happened to be there too."

"He is coming back to the yacht," observes Mr. Smith.

"He will be foolish to think of it," she answers, simply.

At this stage the yacht begins to wake up. The head of Hector of Moidart, much dishevelled, appears at the forecastle, and that wiry mariner is rubbing his eyes; but no sooner does he perceive that one of the ladies is on deck than he suddenly ducks down again —to get his face washed, and his paper collar. Then there is a voice heard in the saloon calling:—

"Who has left my spirit-lamp burning?"

"Oh, good gracious!" says the Youth, and tumbles down the companion incontinently.

Then the Laird appears, bringing up with him a huge red volume entitled *Municipal*

London; but no sooner does he find that Miss Avon is on deck than he puts aside that mighty compendium, and will have her walk up and down with him before breakfast.

"What?" he says, eyeing the cup and saucer, "have ye had your breakfast already?"

"Mr. Smith was so kind as to bring me a cup of tea."

"What," he says again—and he is obviously greatly delighted. "Of his own making? I did not think he had as much gumption."

"I beg your pardon, sir?" said she. She had been startled by the whistling of a curlew close by, and had not heard him distinctly.

"I said he was a smart lad," said the Laird, unblushingly. "Oh, ay, a good lad; ye will not find many better lads than Howard. Will I tell ye a secret?"

"Well, sir—if you like," said she.

There was a mysterious, but humorous look about the Laird; and he spoke in a whisper.

"It is not good sometimes for young folk to know what is in store for them. But I mean

to give him Denny-mains. Whish! Not a word. I'll surprise him some day."

"He ought to be very grateful to you, sir," was her answer.

"That he is—that he is," said the Laird; "he's an obedient lad. And I should not wonder if he had Denny-mains long before he expects it; though I must have my crust of bread, ye know. It would be a fine occupation for him, looking after the estate; and what is the use of his living in London, and swallowing smoke and fog? I can assure ye that the air at Denny-mains, though it's no far from Glasgow, is as pure as it is in this very Loch Speliv."

"Oh, indeed, sir."

They had another couple of turns in silence.

"Ye're verra fond of sailing," says the Laird.

"I am now," she says. "But I was very much afraid before I came; I have suffered so terribly in crossing the Channel. Somehow one never thinks of being ill here—with nice clean cabins—and no engines throbbing——"

"I meant that ye like well enough to go sailing about these places?"

"Oh yes," says she. "When shall I ever have such a beautiful holiday, again?"

The Laird laughed a little to himself. Then he said with a business-like air:

"I have been thinking that, when my nephew came to Denny-mains, I would buy a yacht for him, that he could keep down the Clyde somewhere—at Gourock, or Kilmun, or Dunoon, maybe. It is a splendid ground for yachting—a splendid! Ye have never been through the Kyles of Bute?"

"Oh, yes, sir; I have been through them in the steamer."

"Ay, but a yacht; wouldn't that be better? And I am no sure I would not advise him to have a steam-yacht—ye are so much more independent of wind and tide; and I'm thinking ye could get a verra good little steam-yacht for 3,000*l*."

"Oh, indeed."

"A great deal depends on the steward," he

continues, seriously. "A good steward that does not touch drink, is jist worth anything. If I could get a first-class man, I would not mind giving him two pounds a week, with his clothes and his keep, while the yacht was being used; and I would not let him away in the winter — no, no. Ye could employ him at Denny-mains, as a butler-creature, or something like that."

She did not notice the peculiarity of the little pronoun: if she had, how could she have imagined that the Laird was really addressing himself to her?

"I have none but weeman-servants indoors at Denny-mains," he continued, "but when Howard comes, I would prefer him to keep the house like other people, and I will not stint him as to means. Have I told ye what Welliam Dunbaur says—

Be merry, man, and tak not sair in mind——"

"Oh, yes, I remember."

"There's fine common sense in that. And do not you believe the people who tell ye that

the Scotch are a dour people, steeped in Calvinism, and niggardly and grasping at the last farthing——"

"I have found them exceedingly kind to me, and warm-hearted and generous——" says she; but he interrupted her suddenly.

"I'll tell ye what I'll do," said he, with decision. "When I buy that yacht, I'll get Tom Galbraith to paint every panel in the saloon—no matter what it costs!"

"Your nephew will be very proud of it," she said.

"And I would expect to take a trip in her myself, occasionally," he added, in a facetious manner. "I would expect to be invited——"

"Surely, sir, you cannot expect your nephew to be so ungrateful——"

"Oh," he said, "I only expect reasonable things. Young people are young people; they cannot like to be always hampered by grumbling old fogeys. No, no; if I present any one wi' a yacht, I do not look on myself as a piece of its furniture."

The Laird seemed greatly delighted. His step on the deck was firmer. In the pauses of the conversation she heard something about—

tántará ! Sing tántará !

"Will ye take your maid with ye?" he asked of her, abruptly.

The girl looked up with a bewildered air—perhaps with a trifle of alarm in her eyes.

"I, sir?"

"Ha, ha!" said he, laughing, "I forgot. Ye have not been invited yet. No more have I. But—if the yacht were ready—and—and if ye were going—ye would take your maid, no doubt, for comfort's sake?"

The girl looked reassured. She said, cheerfully:

"Well, sir, I don't suppose I shall ever go yachting again, after I leave the *White Dove*. And if I were, I don't suppose I should be able to afford to have a maid with me, unless the dealers in London should suddenly begin to pay me a good deal more than they have done hitherto."

At this point she was summoned below by her hostess calling. The Laird was left alone on deck. He continued to pace up and down, muttering to himself, with a proud look on his face.

"A landscape in every panel, as I'm a living man! . . . Tom 'll do it well, when I tell him who it's for. . . . The leddies' cabin, blue and silver—cool in the summer—the skylight pented —she'll no be saying that the Scotch are wanting in taste when she sees that cabin!

Sing tántará! Sing tántará!
** * * The Highland army rues*
That ere they came to Cromdale!

And her maid—if she will not be able to afford a maid, who will?—French, if she likes! Blue and silver—blue and silver—that's it!"

And then the Laird, still humming his lugubrious battle-song, comes down into the saloon.

"Good morning, ma'am; good morning! Breakfast ready? I'm just ravenous. That

wild lassie has walked me up and down until I am like to faint. A beautiful morning again—splendid!—splendid! And do ye know where ye will be this day next year?"

"I am sure I don't," says his hostess, busy with the breakfast-things.

"I will tell ye. Anchored in the Holy Loch, off Kilmun, in a screw-yacht. Mark my words now: *this very day next year!*"

CHAPTER IX.

A PROTECTOR.

"Oh, ay," says John of Skye, quite proudly, as we go on deck after breakfast, "there will be no more o' the dead calms. We will give Mr. Sutherland a good breeze or two when he comes back to the yat."

It is all Mr. Sutherland and Mr. Sutherland now!—everything is to be done because Mr. Sutherland is coming. Each belaying pin is polished so that one might see to shave in it; Hector of Moidart has spent about two hours in scraping and rubbing the brass and copper of the galley stove-pipe; and Captain John, with many grins and apologies, has got Miss Avon to sew up a rent that has begun to appear in the red ensign. All that he wants now is to

have the yacht beached for a couple of days, to have the long slender sea-grass scraped from her hull: then Mr. Sutherland will see how the *White Dove* will sail!

"I should imagine," says the Youth, in an undertone, to his hostess, as we are working out the narrow entrance to Loch Speliv, "that your doctor-friend must have given those men a liberal *pour-boire* when he left."

"Oh, I am sure not," said she, quickly, as if that was a serious imputation. "That is very unlikely."

"They seem very anxious to have everything put right against his coming," he says; "at all events, your captain seems to think that every good breeze he gets is merely thrown away on us."

"Dr. Sutherland and he," she says, laughing, "were very good friends. And then Angus had very bad luck when he was on board: the glass wouldn't fall. But I have promised to bottle up the equinoctials for him—he will have plenty of winds before we have done with him.

You must stay too, you know, Mr. Smith, and see how the *White Dove* rides out a gale."

He regarded her—with some suspicion. He was beginning to know that this lady's speech —despite the great gentleness and innocence of her eyes—sometimes concealed curious meanings. And was she now merely giving him a kind and generous invitation to go yachting with us for another month; or was she, with a cruel sarcasm, referring to the probability of his having to remain a prisoner for that time, in order to please his uncle?

However, the conversation had to be dropped, for at this moment the Laird and his *protégée* made their appearance; and, of course, a deck-chair had to be brought for her, and a foot-stool, and a sunshade, and a book. But what were these attentions, on the part of her elderly slave, compared with the fact that a young man, presumably enjoying a sound and healthy sleep, should have unselfishly got up at an unholy hour of the morning, and should have risked blowing up the yacht with

spirits of wine in order to get her a cup of tea ?

It was a fine sailing day. Running before a light topsail breeze from the south-east, the *White Dove* was making for the Lynn of Morven, and bringing us more and more within view of the splendid circle of mountains, from Ben Cruachan in the east to Ben Nevis in the north ; from Ben Nevis down to the successive waves of the Morven hills. And we knew why, among all the sunlit yellows and greens —faint as they were in the distance—there were here and there on slope and shoulder stains of a beautiful rose-purple that were a new feature in the landscape. The heather was coming into bloom—the knee-deep, honey-scented heather, the haunt of the snipe, and the muircock, and the mountain hare. And if there was to be for us this year no toiling over the high slopes and crags—looking down from time to time on a spacious world of sunlit sea and island—we were not averse from receiving friendly and substantial messages from those

altitudes. In a day or two now the first crack of the breechloader would startle the silence of the morning air. And Master Fred's larder was sorely in want of variety.

Northward, and still northward, the light breeze tempering the scorching sunlight that glares on the sails and the deck. Each long ripple of the running blue sea flashes in diamonds; and when we look to the south, those silver lines converge and converge, until at the horizon they become a solid blaze of light unendurable to the eye. But it is to the north we turn—to the land of Appin, and Kingairloch, and Lochaber: blow, light wind; and carry us onward, gentle tide; we have an appointment to keep within shadow of the mountains that guard Glencoe.

The Laird has discovered that these two were up early this morning: he becomes facetious.

"Not sleepy yet, Miss Mary?" he says.

"Oh, no—not at all," she says, looking up from her book.

"It's the early bird that catches the first

sketch. Fine and healthy is that early rising, Howard. I'm thinking ye did not sleep sound last night: what for were ye up before anybody was stirring?"

But the Laird does not give him time to answer. Something has tickled the fancy of this profound humourist.

"*Kee! kee!*" he laughs; and he rubs his hands. "I mind a good one I heard from Tom Galbraith, when he and I were at the Bridge of Allan; room to room, ye know; and Tom did snore that night. 'What,' said I to him in the morning, 'had ye nightmare, or *delirium tremens*, that ye made such a noise in the night?' 'Did I snore?' said he—I'm thinking somebody else must have complained before. 'Snore?' said I, 'twenty grampuses was nothing to it.' And Tom—he burst out a-laughing. 'I'm very glad,' says he. 'If I snored, I must have had a sound sleep!' A *sound* sleep—d'ye see? Very sharp—very smart—eh?"—and the Laird laughed and chuckled over that portentous joke.

"Oh, uncle, uncle, uncle!" his nephew cried. "You used never to do such things. You must quit the society of those artists, if they have such a corrupting influence on you."

"I tell ye," he says, with a sudden seriousness, "I would just like to show Tom Galbraith that picture o' Canna that's below. No; I would not ask him to alter a thing. Very good—very good it is. And—and—I think—I will admit it—for a plain man likes the truth to be told—there is just a bit jealousy among them against any English person that tries to paint Scotch scenery. No, no, Miss Mary—don't you be afraid. Ye can hold your own. If I had that picture, now—if it belonged to me—and if Tom was stopping wi' me at Denny-mains, I would not allow him to alter it, not if he offered to spend a week's work on it.

After that—what? The Laird could say no more.

Alas! alas! our wish to take a new route northward was all very well; but we had got

under the lee of Lismore, and slowly and slowly the wind died away, until even the sea was as smooth as the surface of a mirror. It was but little compensation that we could lean over the side of the yacht, and watch the thousands of "sea-blubbers" far down in the water, in all their hues of blue, and purple, and pale pink. The heat of the sun was blistering; scorching with a sharp pain any nose or cheek that was inadvertently turned towards it. As for the Laird, he could not stand this oven-like business any longer; he declared the saloon was ever so much cooler than the deck; and went down below, and lay at length on one of the long blue cushions.

"Why, John," says Queen T., "you are bringing on those dead calms again. What will Dr. Sutherland say to you?"

But John of Skye has his eye on the distant shore.

"Oh, no, mem," he says, with a crafty smile, "there will not be a dead calm very long."

And there, in at the shore, we see a dark line on the water; and it spreads and spreads; the air becomes gratefully cool to the face before the breeze perceptibly fills the sails; then there is a cheerful swing over of the boom and a fluttering of the as yet unreleased head-sails. A welcome breeze, surely, from the far hills of Kingairloch. We thank you, you beautiful Kingairloch, with your deep glens and your rose-purple shoulders of hills: long may you continue to send fresh westerly winds to the parched and passing voyager!

We catch a distant glimpse of the white houses of Port Appin; we bid adieu to the musically-named Eilean-na-Shuna; far ahead of us is the small white lighthouse at the mouth of the narrows of Corran. But there is to be no run up to Fort William for us to-night; the tide will turn soon; we cannot get through the Corran narrows. And so there is a talk of Ballahulish; and Captain John is trying hard to get Miss Avon to pronounce this Bal-a-chaolish. It is not fair of Sandy from Islay

—who thinks he is hidden by the foresail—to grin to himself at these innocent efforts.

Grander and grander grow those ramparts of mountains ahead of us—with their wine-coloured stains of heather on the soft and velvety yellow-green. The wind from the Kingairloch shores still carries us on; and Inversanda swells the breeze; soon we shall be running into that wide channel that leads up to the beautiful Loch Leven. The Laird reappears on deck. He is quite enchanted with the scene around him. He says if an artist had placed that black cloud behind the great bulk of Ben Nevis, it could not have been more artistically arranged. He declares that this entrance to Loch Leven is one of the most beautiful places he has ever seen. He calls attention to the soft green foliage of the steep hills; and to that mighty peak of granite, right in the middle of the landscape, that we discover to be called the Pap of Glencoe. And here, in the mellow light of the afternoon, is the steamer coming down from the north: is

it to be a race between us for the Bal-a-chaolish quay ?

It is an unfair race. We have to yield to brute strength and steam kettles.

Four to one Argyle came on,

as the dirge of Eric says. But we bear no malice. We salute our enemy as he goes roaring and throbbing by ; and there is many a return signal waved to us from the paddle-boxes.

" Mr. Sutherland is no there, mem, I think," says Captain John, who has been scanning those groups of people with his keen eyes.

" I should think not ; he said he was coming to-morrow," is the answer.

" Will he be coming down by the *Chevalier* in the morning, or by the *Mountaineer* at night ?" is the further question.

" I don't know."

" We will be ashore for him in the morning, whatever," says John of Skye cheerfully ; and you would have thought it was his

guest, and not ours, who was coming on board.

The roaring out of the anchor chain was almost immediately followed by Master Fred's bell. Mary Avon was silent and *distraite* at dinner; but nothing more was said of her return to London. It was understood that, when Angus Sutherland came on board, we should go back to Castle Osprey, and have a couple of days on shore, to let the *White Dove* get rid of her parasitic seaweed.

Then, after dinner, a fishing excursion; but this was in a new loch, and we were not very successful. Or was it that most of us were watching, from this cup of water surrounded by the circle of great mountains, the strange movings of the clouds in the gloomy and stormy twilight, long after the sun had sunk?

"It is not a very sheltered place," remarked the Laird, "if a squall were to come down from the hills."

But by and by something appeared that lent

an air of stillness and peace to this sombre scene around us. Over one of those eastern mountains a faint, smoky, suffused yellow light began to show; then the outline of the mountain—serrated with trees—grew dark; then the edge of the moon appeared over the black line of trees; and by and by the world was filled with this new, pale light, though the shadows on the hills were deeper than ever. We did not hurry on our way back to the yacht. It was a magical night—the black, overhanging hills, the white clouds crossing the blue vaults of the heavens, the wan light on the sea. What need for John of Skye to put up that golden lamp at the bow? But it guided us on our way back—under the dusky shadows of the hills.

Then below, in the orange-lit cabin, with cards and dominoes and chess about, a curious thing overhead happens to catch the eye of one of the gamblers. Through the skylight, with this yellow glare, we ought not to see anything; but there, shining in the night, is

a long bar of pale phosphorescent green light. What can this be? Why green? And it is Mary Avon who first suggests what this strangely luminous thing must be—the boom, wet with the dew, shining in the moonlight.

"Come," says the Laird to her, "put a shawl round ye, and we will go up for another look round."

And so, after a bit, they went on deck, these two, leaving the others to their bézique. And the Laird was as careful about the wrapping up of this girl as if she had been a child of five years of age; and when they went out on to the white deck, he would give her his arm that she should not trip over any stray rope; and they were such intimate friends now that he did not feel called upon to talk to her.

But by and by the heart of the Laird was lifted up within him because of the wonderful beauty and silence of this moonlight night.

"It is a great peety," said he, "that you in the south are not brought up as children

to be familiar with the Scotch version of the Psalms of David. It is a fountain-head of poetry that ye can draw from all your life long; and is there any poetry in the world can beat it? And many a time I think that David had a great love for mountains—and that he must have looked at the hills around Jerusalem—and seen them on many a night like this. Ye cannot tell, lassie, what stirs in the heart of a Scotchman or Scotchwoman when they repeat the 121st Psalm :—

I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid;
My safety cometh from the Lord
Who heaven and earth hath made.
Thy foot He'll not let slide, nor will
He slumber that thee keeps:
Behold, He that keeps Israel
He slumbers not nor sleeps.

Ask your friend Dr. Sutherland—ask him whether he has found anything among his philosophy, and science, and the new-fangled leeterature of the day that comes so near to his heart as a verse of the old Psalms that

he learnt as a boy. I have heard of Scotch soldiers in distant countries just bursting out crying, when they heard by chance a bit repeated o' the Psalms of David. And the strength and reliance of them: what grander source of consolation can ye have? 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth, even for ever.' What are the trials of the hour to them that believe and know and hope? They have a sure faith; the captivity is not for ever. Do ye remember the beginning of the 126th Psalm—it reminds me most of all of the Scotch phrase

'laughin' maist like to greet'

—'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Turn again our

captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south!' "

The Laird was silent for a minute or two; there was nothing but the pacing up and down the moonlit deck.

"And you have your troubles too, my lass," said he, at length. "Oh, I know—though ye put so brave a face on it. But you need not be afraid; you need not be afraid. Keep up your heart. I am an old man now; I may have but few years to reckon on; but while I live ye will not want a friend. . . . Ye will not want a friend. . . . If I forget, or refuse what I promise ye this night, may God do so and more unto me!"

But the good-hearted Laird will not have her go to sleep with this solemnity weighing on her mind.

"Come, come," he says cheerfully, "we will go below now; and you will sing me a song — the Queen's Maries, if ye like — though I doubt but that they were a lot o' wild hizzies."

CHAPTER X.

"MARY, MARY!"

IS THERE any one awake and listening—perhaps with a tremor of the heart—for the calling out of "*White Dove*, ahoy!" from the shore? Once the ordinary loud noises of the morning are over—the brief working of the pump, the washing down of the decks—silence reigns once more throughout the yacht. One can only hear a whispering of the rain above.

Then, in the distance, there is a muffled sound of the paddles of a steamer; and that becomes fainter and fainter, while the *White Dove* gradually loses the motion caused by the passing waves. Again there is an absolute stillness; with only that whispering of the rain.

But this sudden sound of oars? and the slight shock against the side of the vessel? The only person on board the yacht who is presentable whips a shawl over her head, darts up the companion way, and boldly emerges into the moist and dismal morning.

"Oh, Angus!" she cries, to this streaming black figure that has just stepped on deck, "what a day you have brought with you!"

"Oh, it is nothing!" says a cheerful voice from out of the dripping macintosh—perhaps it is this shining black garment that makes the wet face and whiskers and hair glow redder than ever, and makes the blue eyes look even bluer. "Nothing at all! John and I have agreed it is going to clear. But this is a fine place to be in, with a falling glass! If you get a squall down from Glencoe, you won't forget it."

"A squall!" she says, looking round, in amazement. Well might she exclaim; for the day is still, and grey, and sombre; the mountains are swathed in mist; the smooth sea troubled only by the constant rain.

However, the ruddy-faced Doctor, having divested himself of his dripping garment, follows his hostess down the companion, and into the saloon, and sits down on one of the couches. There is an odd, half pathetic expression on his face, as he looks around.

"It seems a long time ago," he says, apparently to himself.

"What does?" asks his hostess, removing her head-gear.

"The evenings we used to spend in this very saloon," says he—looking with a strange interest on those commonplace objects, the draughts and dominoes, the candlesticks and cigar-boxes, the cards and books—"away up there in the north. It seems years since we were at Dunvegan, doesn't it, and lying off Vaternish Point? There never was as snug a cabin as this in any yacht. It is like returning to an old home to get into it."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," says his hostess, regarding him with a great kindliness. "We will try to make you forget that you have

ever been away. Although," she added frankly, "I must tell you you have been turned out of your state-room — for a time. I know you won't mind having a berth made up for you on one of those couches."

"Of course not," he said; "if I am not in your way at all. But ——"

And his face asked the question.

"Oh! it is a nephew of Denny-mains who has come on board—a Mr. Smith, a very nice young fellow; I am sure you will like him."

There was nothing said in reply to this.

Then the new-comer inquired, rather timidly, "You are all well, I hope?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And—and Miss Avon, too?" said he.

"Oh, yes! But Mary has suffered a great misfortune since you left."

She looked up quickly. Then she told him the story; and in telling him her indignation awoke afresh. She spoke rapidly. The old injury had touched her anew.

But, strangely enough, although Angus

Sutherland displayed a keen interest in the matter, he was not at all moved to that passion of anger and desire for vengeance that had shaken the Laird. Not at all. He was very thoughtful for a time; but he only said, "You mean she has to support herself now?"

"Absolutely."

"She will naturally prefer that to being dependent on her friends?"

"She will not be dependent on her friends, I know," is the answer; "though the Laird has taken such a great liking for her that I believe he would give her half Denny-mains."

He started a little bit at this; but immediately said—

"Of course she will prefer independence. And, as you say, she is quite capable of earning her own living. Well, she does not worry about it? It does not trouble her mind?"

"That affair of her uncle wounded her very keenly, I imagine, though she said little; but as for the loss of her little fortune, not at all! She is as light-hearted as ever. The only

thing is that she is possessed by a mad notion that she should start away at once for London."

"Why?"

"To begin work; I tell her she must work here."

"But she is not anxious? She is not troubled?"

"Not a bit! The Laird says she has the courage of ten men; and I believe him."

"That is all right. I was going to prescribe a course of Marcus Aurelius; but if you have got philosophy in your blood, it is better than getting it through the brain."

And so this talk ended; leaving on the mind of one of those two friends a distinct sense of disappointment. She had been under the impression that Angus Sutherland had a very warm regard for Mary Avon; and she had formed certain other suspicions. She had made sure that he, more quickly than any one else, would resent the injury done to this helpless girl. And now he seemed to treat it as of no

account. If she was not troubling herself; if she was not giving herself headaches about it; then, no matter! It was a professional view of the case. A dose of Marcus Aurelius? It was not thus that the warm-hearted Laird had espoused Mary Avon's cause.

Then the people came one by one in to breakfast; and our young Doctor was introduced to the stranger who had ousted him from his state-room. Last of all came Mary Avon.

How she managed to go along to him, and to shake hands with him, seeing that her eyes were bent on the floor all the time, was a mystery. But she did shake hands with him; and said, "How do you do?" in a somewhat formal manner; and she seemed a little paler than usual.

"I don't think you are looking quite as well as when I left," said he, with a great interest and kindness in his look.

"Thank you, I am very well," she said; and then she instantly turned to the Laird and

began chatting to him. Angus Sutherland's face burned red; it was not thus she had been used to greet him in the morning, when we were far away beyond the shores of Canna.

And then, when we found that the rain was over, and that there was not a breath of wind in this silent, grey, sombre world of mountain and mist, and when we went ashore for a walk along the still lake, what must she needs do but attach herself to the Laird, and take no notice of her friend of former days? Angus walked behind with his hostess, but he rarely took his eyes off the people in front. And when Miss Avon, picking up a wild flower now and again, was puzzling over its name, he did not, as once he would have done, come to her help with his student-days' knowledge of botany. Howard Smith brought her a bit of wall rue, and said he thought they called it *Asplenium marinum*: there was no interference. The preoccupied Doctor behind only asked how far Miss Avon was going to walk with her lame foot.

The Laird of Denny-mains knew nothing of

all this occult business. He was rejoicing in his occupation of philosopher and guide. He was assuring us all that this looked like a real Highland day—far more so than the Algerian blue sky that had haunted us for so long. He pointed out, as we walked along the winding shores of Loch Leven, by the path that rose, and fell, and skirted small precipices all hanging in foliage, how beautiful was that calm, slate-blue mirror beneath, showing every outline of the sombre mountains, with their masses of Landseer mist. He stopped his companion to ask her if she had ever seen anything finer in colour than the big clusters of scarlet rowans among the yellow-green leaves? Did she notice the scent of the meadow-sweet, in the moist air of this patch of wood? He liked to see those white stars of the grass-of-Parnassus; they reminded him of many a stroll among the hills about Loch Katrine.

"And this still Loch Leven," he said at length, and without the least blush on his face, "with the Glencoe mountains at the end of it,

I have often heard say was as picturesque a loch as any in Scotland, on a gloomy day like this. Gloomy I call it, but ye see there are fine silver glints among the mist; and—and, in fact, there's a friend of mine has often been wishing to have a water-colour sketch of it. If ye had time, Miss Mary, to make a bit drawing from the deck of the yacht, ye might name your own price—just name your own price. I will buy it for him."

A friend! Mary Avon knew very well who the friend was.

"I should be afraid, sir," said she, laughing, "to meddle with anything about Glencoe."

"Toots! toots!" said he; "ye have not enough confidence. I know twenty young men in Edinburgh and Glasgow who have painted every bit of Glencoe, from the bridge to the King's House inn, and not one of them able to come near ye. Mind, I'm looking forward to showing your pictures to Tom Galbraith; I'm thinking he'll stare!"

The Laird chuckled again.

"Oh, ay! he does not know what a formidable rival has come from the south; I'm thinking he'll stare when he comes to Dennymains to meet ye. Howard, what's that down there?"

The Laird had caught sight of a pink flower on the side of a steep little ravine, leading down to the shore.

"Oh, I don't want it; I don't want it!" Mary Avon cried.

But the Laird was obdurate. His nephew had to go scrambling down through the alders and rowan-trees and wet bracken to get this bit of pink crane's-bill for Miss Avon's bouquet. And of course she was much pleased; and thanked him very prettily; and was it catch-fly, or herb robert, or what was it?

Then out of sheer common courtesy she had to turn to Angus Sutherland.

"I am sure Dr. Sutherland can tell us," she says, timidly; and she does not meet his eyes.

"It is one of the crane's-bills, any way,"

he says, indifferently. "Don't you think you had better return now, Miss Avon, or you will hurt your foot?"

"Oh, my foot is quite well now, thank you!" she says; and on she goes again.

We pass by the first cuttings of the slate-quarries; the men suspended by ropes round their waists and hewing away at the face of the cliff. We go through the long straggling village; and the Laird remarks that it is not usual for a Celtic race to have such clean cottages, with pots of flowers in the window. We saunter idly onwards, towards those great mountain-masses, and there is apparently no thought of returning.

"When we've gone so far, might we not go on to the mouth of the pass?" she asks. "I should like to have a look even at the beginning of Glencoe."

"I thought so," said the Laird, with a shrewd smile. "Oh, ay! we may as well go on."

Past those straggling cottages, with the

elder-bush at their doors to frighten away witches; over the bridge that spans the brawling Cona; along the valley down which the stream rushes; and this gloom overhead deepens and deepens. The first of the great mountains appears on our right, green to the summit, and yet so sheer from top to bottom that it is difficult to understand how those dots of sheep maintain their footing. Then the marks on him; he seems to be a huge Behemoth, with great eyes, grand, complacent, even sardonic in his look. But the further and further mountains have nothing of this mild, grand humour about them; they are sullen and awful; they grasp the earth with their mighty bulk below, but far away they lift their lurid peaks to the threatening skies, up there where the thunder threatens to shake the silence of the world.

"Miss Avon," Dr. Sutherland again remonstrates, "you have come five or six miles now. Suppose you have to walk back in the rain?"

"I don't mind about that," she says, cheerfully. "But I am dreadfully, dreadfully hungry."

"Then we must push on to Clachaig," says the Laird; "there is no help for it."

"But wait a moment," she says.

She goes to the side of the road, where the great grey boulders, and ferns, and moist marsh-grass are, and begins to gather handfuls of "sourocks;" that is to say, of the smaller sheep's sorrel. "Who will partake of this feast to allay the pangs of hunger?"

"Is thy servant a baa-lamb that she should do this thing?" her hostess says, and drives the girl forward.

The inn is reached but in time; for behold there is a grey "smurr" of mist coming down the glen; and the rain is beginning to darken the grey boulders. And very welcome are those chairs, and the bread and cheese and beer, and the humble efforts in art around the walls. If the feast is not as the feasting of the Fishmongers—if we have no pretty

boxes to carry home to the children—if we have no glimpses of the pale blue river and shipping through the orange light of the room, at least we are not amazed by the appearance of the Duke of Sussex in the garb of a Highlander. And the frugal meal is substantial enough. Then the question about getting back arises.

"Now, Mary," says her hostess, "you have got to pay for your amusement. How will you like walking seven or eight miles in a thunderstorm?"

But here the Laird laughs.

"No, no," he says, going to the window. "That waggonette that has just come up I ordered at the inn on passing. Ye will not have to walk a step, my lass; but I think we had better be going, as it looks black overhead."

Black enough, indeed, was it as we drove back in this silent afternoon, with a thunderstorm apparently about to break over our heads. And it was close and sultry when

we got on board again, though there was as yet no wind. Captain John did not like the look of the sky.

"I said you were going to bring a gale with you, Angus," his hostess remarked to him, cheerfully, at dinner.

"It begins to look like it," he answered, gravely; "and it is getting too late to run away from here if the wind rises. As soon as it begins to blow, if I were John, I would put out the starboard anchor."

"I know he will take your advice," she answers, promptly.

We saw little of Angus Sutherland that evening; for it was raining hard and blowing hard; and the cabin below, with its lit candles, and books and cards, and what not, was cheerful enough; while he seemed very much to prefer being on deck. We could hear the howling of the wind through the rigging, and the gurgling of the water along the sides of the yacht; and we knew by the way she was swaying that she was pulling hard at

her anchor chain. There was to be no beautiful moonlight for us that night, with the black shadows on the hills, and the lane of silver on the water.

A dripping and glistening figure comes down the companion; a gleaming red face appears at the door. Mary Avon looks up from her draughts, but for an instant.

"Well, Angus, what is the report?" says Queen Titania, brightly. "And what is all the noise on deck? And why don't you come below?"

"They have been paying out more anchor chain," says the rough voice from out of the macintosh; "it is likely to be a nasty night, and we are going to lower the topmast now. I want you to be so kind as to tell Fred to leave out some whisky and some bread and cheese; for John thinks of having an anchor watch."

"The bread and cheese and whisky Fred can get at any time," says she; and she adds with some warmth, "But you are not going to

stay on deck on such a night? Come in here at once. Leave your macintosh on the steps."

Is it that he looks at that draught-board? It is Mr. Howard Smith who is playing with Mary Avon. The faithless Miranda has got another Ferdinand now.

"I think I would rather take my turn like the rest," he says, absently. "There may be some amusement before the morning."

And so the black figure turned away and disappeared; and a strange thing was that the girl playing draughts seemed to have been so bewildered by the apparition that she stared at the board, and could not be got to understand how she had made a gross and gigantic blunder.

"Oh, yes; oh, certainly!" she said, hurriedly; but she did not know how to retrieve her obvious mistake.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNSPOKEN APPEAL.

"What have I done? Is she vexed? Have I offended her?" he asked the next morning, in a rapid manner, when his hostess came on deck. The gale had abated somewhat, but gloom overspread earth and sky. It was nothing to the gloom that overspread his usually frank and cheerful face.

"You mean Mary?" she says, though she knows well enough.

"Yes; haven't you seen? She seems to treat me as though we had never met before—as though we were perfect strangers—and I know she is too kind-hearted to cause any one pain——"

Here he looks somewhat embarrassed for a moment; but his customary straightforwardness comes to his rescue.

"Yes; I will confess I am very much hurt by it. And—and I should like to know if there is any cause. Surely you must have noticed it?"

She had noticed it, sure enough; and, in contrast with that studied coldness which Mary Avon had shown to her friend of former days, she had remarked the exceeding friendliness the young lady was extending to the Laird's nephew. But would she draw the obvious conclusion? Not likely; she was too staunch a friend to believe any such thing. All the same there remained in her mind a vague feeling of surprise, with perhaps a touch of personal injury.

"Well, Angus, you know," she said, evasively; "Mary is very much preoccupied just at present. Her whole condition of life is changed, and she has many things to think of——"

"Yes; but she is frank enough with her other friends. What have I done, that I should be made a stranger of?"

A pathetic answer comes to these idle frettings of the hour. Far away on the shore a number of small black figures emerge from the woods, and slowly pass along the winding road that skirts the rocks. They are following a cart—a common farmyard cart; but on the wooden planks is placed a dark object that is touched here and there with silver—or perhaps it is only the white cords. Between the overhanging gloom of the mountains and the cold greys of the wind-swept sea the small black line passes slowly on. And these two on board the yacht watch it in silence. Are they listening for the wail of the pipes—the wild dirge of Lord Lovat, or the cry of the *Cumhadh na Cloinne?* But the winds are loud, and the rushing seas are loud; and now the rude farmyard cart, with its solemn burden, is away out at the point; and presently the whole simple pageant has disappeared.

The lonely burying-ground lies far away among the hills.

Angus Sutherland turns round again, with a brief sigh.

"It will be all the same in a few years," he says to his hostess; and then he adds, indifferently, "What do you say about starting? The wind is against us; but anything is better than lying here. There were some bad squalls in the night."

Very soon after this the silent loch is resounding with the rattle of halyards, blocks, and chains; and Angus Sutherland is seeking distraction from those secret cares of the moment in the excitement of hard work. Nor is it any joke getting in that enormous quantity of anchor chain. In the midst of all the noise and bustle Mary Avon appears on deck to see what is going on, and she is immediately followed by young Smith.

"Why don't you help them?" she says, laughing.

"So I would, if I knew what to do," he

says, good-naturedly. "I'll go and ask Dr. Sutherland."

It was a fatal step. Augus Sutherland suggested, somewhat grimly, that, if he liked, he might lend them a hand at the windlass. A muscular young Englishman does not like to give in; and for a time he held his own with the best of them; but long before the starboard anchor had been got up, and the port one hove short, he had had enough of it. He did not volunteer to assist at the throat halyards. To Miss Avon, who was calmly looking on, he observed that it would take him about a fortnight to get his back straight.

"That," said she, finding an excuse for him instantly, "is because you worked too hard at it at first. You should have watched the Islay man. All he does is to call 'Heave!' and to make his shoulders go up as if he were going to do the whole thing himself. But he does not help a bit. I have watched him again and again."

"Your friend, Dr. Sutherland," said he, regarding her for an instant as he spoke, "seems to work as hard as any of them."

"He is very fond of it," she said, simply, without any embarrassment; nor did she appear to regard it as singular that Angus Sutherland should have been spoken of specially as her friend.

Angus Sutherland himself comes rapidly aft, loosens the tiller rope, and jams the helm over. And now the anchor is hove right up; the reefed mainsail and small jib quickly fill out before this fresh breeze; and, presently, with a sudden cessation of noise, we are spinning away through the leaden-coloured waters. We are not sorry to get away from under the gloom of these giant hills; for the day still looks squally, and occasionally a scud of rain comes whipping across, scarcely sufficient to wet the decks. And there is more life and animation on board now; a good deal of walking up and down in ulsters, with inevitable collisions; and of remarks shouted against, or with, the wind;

and of joyful pointing towards certain silver gleams of light in the west and south. There is hope in front; behind us nothing but darkness and the threatenings of storm. The Pap of Glencoe has disappeared in rain; the huge mountains on the right are as black as the deeds of murder done in the glen below; Ardgour over there, and Lochaber here, are steeped in gloom. And there is less sadness now in the old refrain of Lochaber since there is a prospect of the South shining before us. If Mary Avon is singing to herself about

Lochaber no more! And Lochaber no more!
We'll maybe return to Lochaber no more!

—it is with a light heart.

But then if it is a fine thing to go bowling along with a brisk breeze on our beam, it is very different when we get round Ardshiel and find the southerly wind veering to meet us dead in the teeth. And there is a good sea running up Loch Linnhe—a heavy grey-green sea that the *White Dove* meets and breaks, with

spurts of spray forward, and a line of hissing foam in our wake. The zig-zag beating takes us alternately to Ardgour and Appin, until we can see here and there the cheerful patches of yellow corn at the foot of the giant and gloomy hills; then "'Bout ship" again, and away we go on the heaving and rushing grey-green sea.

And is Mary Avon's oldest friend—the woman who is the staunchest of champions—being at last driven to look askance at the girl? Is it fair that the young lady should be so studiously silent when our faithful Doctor is by, and instantly begin to talk again when he goes forward to help at the jib or foresail sheets? And when he asks her, as in former days, to take the tiller, she somewhat coldly declines the offer he has so timidly and respectfully made. But as for Mr. Smith, that is a very different matter. It is he whom she allows to go below for some wrapper for her neck. It is he who stands by, ready to shove over the top of the companion when she crouches to avoid a passing shower of rain. It is he with whom she jokes

and talks—when the Laird does not monopolise her.

"I would have believed it of any girl in the world rather than of her," says her hostess, to another person, when these two happen to be alone in the saloon below. "I don't believe it yet. It is impossible. Of course a girl who is left as penniless as she is might be pardoned for looking round and being friendly with rich people who are well inclined towards her; but I don't believe—I say it is impossible—that she should have thrown Angus over just because she saw a chance of marrying the Laird's nephew. Why, there never was a girl we have ever known so independent as she is! —not any one half as proud and as fearless. She looks upon going to London and earning her own living as nothing at all! She is the very last girl in the world to speculate on making a good match—she has too much pride —she would not speak another word to Howard Smith if such a monstrous thing were suggested to her."

"Very well," says the meek listener. The possibility was not of his suggesting, assuredly: he knows better.

Then the Admiral-in-chief of the *White Dove* sits silent and puzzled for a time.

"And yet her treatment of poor Angus is most unfair. He is deeply hurt by it—he told me so this morning——"

"If he is so fearfully sensitive that he cannot go yachting and enjoy his holiday because a girl does not pay him attention——"

"Why, what do you suppose he came back here for?" she says, warmly. "To go sailing in the *White Dove?* No; not if twenty *White Doves* were waiting for him! He knows too well the value of his time to stay away so long from London if it were merely to take the tiller of a yacht. He came back here, at great personal sacrifice, because Mary was on board."

"Has he told you so?"

"He has not; but one has eyes."

"Then suppose she has changed her mind: how can you help it?"

She says nothing for a second. She is preparing the table for Master Fred: perhaps she tosses the novels on to the couch with an impatience they do not at all deserve. But at length she says—

"Well; I never thought Mary would have been so fickle as to go chopping and changing about within the course of a few weeks. However, I won't accuse her of being mercenary; I will not believe that. Howard Smith is a most gentlemanly young man—good-looking, too, and pleasant tempered. I can imagine any girl liking him."

Here a volume of poems is pitched on to the top of the draught-board, as if it had done her some personal injury.

"And in any case she might be more civil to one who is a very old friend of ours," she adds.

Further discourse on this matter is impossible; for our Freidrich d'or comes in to prepare for luncheon. But why the charge of incivility? When we are once more assembled together, the girl is quite the reverse of uncivil

towards him. She shows him—when she is forced to speak to him—an almost painful courtesy; and she turns her eyes down, as if she were afraid to speak to him. This is no flaunting coquette, proud of her wilful caprice.

And as for poor Angus, he does his best to propitiate her. They begin talking about the picturesqueness of various cities. Knowing that Miss Avon has lived the most of her life, if she was not actually born, in London, he strikes boldly for London. What is there in Venice, what is there in the world, like London in moonlight—with the splendid sweep of her river—and the long lines of gas-lamps—and the noble bridges? But she is all for Edinburgh: if Edinburgh had but the Moldau running through that valley, and the bridges of Prague to span it, what city in Europe could compare with it? And the Laird is so delighted with her approval of the Scotch capital, that he forgets for the moment his Glaswegian antipathy to the rival city, and enlarges no less on the picturesqueness of it than on its wealth

of historical traditions. There is not a stain of blood on any floor that he does not believe in. Then the Sanctuary of Holyrood: what stories has he not to tell about that famous refuge?

"I believe the mysterious influence of that Sanctuary has gone out and charmed all the country about Edinburgh," said our young Doctor. "I suppose you know that there are several plants, poisonous elsewhere, that are quite harmless in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. You remember I told you, Miss Avon, that evening we went out to Arthur's Seat?"

It was well done, Queen Titania must have thought, to expose this graceless flirt before her new friends. So she had been walking out to Arthur's Seat with him, in the summer afternoons?

"Y—yes," says the girl.

"Ay; that is a most curious thing," says the Laird, not noticing her downcast looks and flushed cheeks. "But what were they, did ye say?"

"Umbelliferous plants," replies Angus Sutherland, in quite a matter-of-fact manner. "The *Œnanthe crocata* is one of them, I remember; and I think the *Cicuta virosa*—that is, the Water Hemlock."

"I would jist like to know," says the Laird, somewhat pompously, "whether that does not hold good about the neighbourhood of Glesca also. There's nothing so particular healthy about the climate of Edinburgh, as far as ever I heard tell of. Quite the reverse—quite the reverse. East winds—fogs—no wonder the people are shilpit-looking creatures as a general rule—like a lot o' Paisley weavers. But the ceety is a fine ceety, I will admit that; and many's the time I've said to Tom Galbraith that he could get no finer thing to paint than the view of the High Street at night from Prince's Street—especially on a moonlight night. A fine ceety: but the people themselves!—" here the Laird shook his head. "And their manner o' speech is most vexsome—a long, sing-song kind o' yaumering as if

they had not sufficient manliness to say outright what they meant. If we are to have a Scotch accent, I prefer the accent—the very slight accent—ye hear about Glesca. I would like to hear what Miss Avon has to say upon that point."

"I am not a very good judge, sir," says Miss Avon, prudently.

Then on deck. The leaden-black waves are breaking in white foam along the shores of Kingairloch and the opposite rocks of Eilean-na-Shuna; and we are still laboriously beating against the southerly wind; but those silver-yellow gleams in the south have increased, over the softly-purple hills of Morvern and Duart. Black as night are the vast ranges of mountains in the north; but they are far behind us; we have now no longer any fear of a white shaft of lightning falling from the gloom overhead.

The decks are dry now; camp-stools are in requisition; there is to be a consultation about our future plans, after the *White Dove*

has been beached for a couple of days. The Laird admits that, if it had been three days or four days, he would like to run through to Glasgow and to Strathgovan, just to see how they are getting on with the gas-lamps in the Mitherdrum Road; but, as it is, he will write for a detailed report; hence he is free to go wherever we wish. Miss Avon, interrogated, answers that she thinks she must leave us and set out for London; whereupon she is bidden to hold her tongue and not talk foolishness. Our Doctor, also interrogated, looks down on the sitting parliament—he is standing at the tiller—and laughs.

"Don't be too sure of getting to Castle Osprey to-night," he says, "whatever your plans may be. The breeze is falling off a bit. But you may put me down as willing to go anywhere with you, if you will let me come."

This decision seemed greatly to delight his hostess. She said we could not do without him She was herself ready to go anywhere now;

she eagerly embraced the Youth's suggestion that there were, according to John of Skye's account, vast numbers of seals in the bays on the western shores of Knapdale; and at once assured the Laird, who said he particularly wanted a sealskin or two and some skarts' feathers for a young lady, that he should not be disappointed. Knapdale, then, it was to be.

But in the meantime? Dinner found us in a dead calm. After dinner, when we came on deck, the sun had gone down; and in the pale, tender blue-grey of the twilight, the golden star of Lismore lighthouse was already shining. Then we had our warning lights put up—the port red light shedding a soft crimson glow on the bow of the dingay, the starboard green light touching with a cold, wan colour the iron shrouds. To crown all, as we were watching the dark shadows of Lismore island, a thin, white, vivid line—like the edge of a shilling—appeared over the low hill; and then the full moon rose into the partially clouded sky. It was a beautiful night.

But we gave up all hope of reaching Castle Osprey. The breeze had quite gone; the calm sea slowly rolled. We went below—to books, draughts, and what not; Angus Sutherland alone remaining on deck, having his pipe for his companion.

It was about an hour afterwards that we were startled by sounds on deck; and presently we knew that the *White Dove* was again flying through the water. The women took some little time to get their shawls and things ready; had they known what was awaiting them, they would have been more alert.

For no sooner were we on deck than we perceived that the *White Dove* was tearing through the water without the slightest landmark or light to guide her. The breeze that had sprung up had swept before it a bank of sea-fog—a most unusual thing in these windy and changeable latitudes; and so dense was this fog that the land on all sides of us had disappeared, while it was quite impossible to

say where Lismore light house was. Angus Sutherland had promptly surrendered the helm to John of Skye; and had gone forward. The men on the look out at the bow were themselves invisible.

"Oh, it is all right, mem!" called out John of Skye, through the dense fog, in answer to a question. "I know the lay o' the land very well, though I do not see it. And I will keep her down to Duart, bekass of the tide."

And then he calls out—

"Hector, do you not see any land yet?"

"*Cha n'eil!*" answers Hector, in his native tongue.

"We'll put a tack on her now. Ready about, boys!"

"*Ready about!*"

Round slews her head, with blocks and sails clattering and flapping; there is a scuffle of making fast the lee sheets; then once more the *White Dove* goes plunging into the unknown. The non-experts see nothing at all

but the fog; they have not the least idea whether Lismore lighthouse—which is a solid object to run against—is on port or starboard bow, or right astern, for the matter of that. They are huddled in a group about the top of the companion. They can only listen, and wait.

John of Skye's voice rings out again.

"Hector, can you not mek out the land yet?"

"*Cha n'eil!*"

"What does he say?" the Laird asks, almost in a whisper: he is afraid to distract attention at such a time.

"He says 'No,'" Angus Sutherland answers. "He cannot make out the land. It is very thick; and there are bad rocks between Lismore and Duart. I think I will climb up to the cross-trees and have a look round."

What was this? A girl's hand laid for an instant on his arm; a girl's voice—low, quick, beseeching—saying "*Oh, no!*"

It was the trifle of a moment.

"There is not the least danger," says he, lightly. "Sometimes you can see better at the cross-trees."

Then the dim figure is seen going up the shrouds; but he is not quite up at the cross-trees, when the voice of John of Skye is heard again.

"Mr. Sutherland!

"All right, John!" and the dusky figure comes stumbling down and across the loose sheets on deck.

"If ye please, sir," says John of Skye; and the well-known formula means that Angus Sutherland is to take the helm. Captain John goes forward to the bow: the only sound around us is the surging of the unseen waves.

"I hope you are not frightened, Miss Avon," says Mr. Smith, quite cheerfully; though he is probably listening, like the rest of us, for the sullen roaring of breakers in the dark.

"No — I am bewildered — I don't know what it is all about."

"You need not be afraid," Angus Sutherland says to her, abruptly, for he will not have the Youth interfere in such matters, "with Captain John on board. He sees better in a fog than most men in daylight."

"We are in the safe keeping of one greater than any Captain John," says the Laird, simply and gravely: he is not in any alarm.

Then a call from the bow.

"Helm hard down, sir!"

"Hard down it is, John!"

Then the rattle again of sheets and sails; and as she swings round again on the other tack, what is that vague, impalpable shadow one sees—or fancies one sees—on the starboard bow?

"Is that the land, John?" Angus Sutherland asks, as the skipper comes aft.

"Oh, ay!" says he, with a chuckle. "I was thinking to myself it wass the loom of Duart I sah once or twice. And I wass saying

to Hector if it wass his sweetheart he will look, for he will see better in the night."

Then by and by this other object, to which all attention is summoned: the fog grows thinner and thinner; some one catches sight of a pale, glimmering light on our port quarter; and we know that we have left Lismore light-house in our wake. And still the fog grows thinner, until it is suffused with a pale blue radiance; then suddenly we sail out into the beautiful moonlight, with the hills along the horizon all black under the clear and solemn skies.

It is a pleasant sail into the smooth harbour on this enchanted night: the far windows of Castle Osprey are all aglow; the mariners are to rest for a while from the travail of the sea. And as we go up the moonlit road, the Laird is jocular enough; and asks Mary Avon, who is his companion, whether she was prepared to sing "Lochaber no more!" when we were going blindly through the mist But our young Doctor remembers that hour or so of mist for

another reason. There was something in the sound of the girl's voice he cannot forget. The touch of her hand was slight; but his arm has not even yet parted with the thrill of it.

CHAPTER XII.

HIS LORDSHIP.

Miss Avon is seated in the garden in front of Castle Osprey, under the shade of a drooping ash. Her book lies neglected beside her, on the iron seat; she is idly looking abroad on the sea and the mountains, now all aglow in the warm light of the afternoon.

There is a clanging of a gate below. Presently, up the steep gravel path, comes a tall and handsome young fellow, in full shooting accoutrement, with his gun over his shoulder. Her face instantly loses its dreamy expression. She welcomes him with a cheerful "Good evening!" and asks what sport he has had. For answer he comes across the greensward; places his gun against the trunk of the ash; takes a seat beside her; and puts his hands round one knee.

"It is a long story," says the Youth. "Will it bore you to hear it? I've seen how the women in a country house dread the beginning of the talk at dinner about the day's shooting; and yet give themselves up, like the martyrs and angels they are; and—and it is very different from hunting, don't you know, for there the women can talk as much as anybody."

"Oh! but I should like to hear, really," says she. "It was so kind of a stranger on board a steamer to offer you a day's shooting."

"Well, it was," says he; "and the place has been shot over only once—on the 12th. Very well; you shall hear the whole story. I met the keeper by appointment, down at the quay. I don't know what sort of a fellow he is—Highlander or Lowlander—I am not such a swell at those things as my uncle is; but I should have said he talked a most promising mixture of Devonshire, Yorkshire, and Westmoreland——"

"What was his name?"

"I don't know," says the other leisurely.

"I called him Donald, on chance; and he took to it well enough. I confess I thought it rather odd he had only one dog with him—an old retriever; but then, don't you know, the moor had been shot over only once; and I thought we might get along. As we walked along to the hill, Donald says, 'Dinna tha mind, sir, if a blackcock gets up; knock un ower, knock un ower, sir.'"

At this point Miss Avon most unfairly bursts out laughing.

"Why," she says, "what sort of countryman was he if he talked like that? That is how they speak in plays about the colliery districts."

"Oh, it's all the same!" says the young man, quite unabashed. "I gave him my bag to carry, and put eight or ten cartridges in my pockets. 'A few mower, sir; a few mower, sir,' says Donald; and crams my pockets full. Then he would have me put cartridges in my gun even before we left the road; and as soon as we began to ascend the hill I saw he was on the outlook for a straggler or two, or

perhaps a hare. But he warned me that the shooting had been very bad in these districts this year; and that on the 12th the rain was so persistent that scarcely anybody went out. Where could we have been on the 12th? surely there was no such rain with us?"

"But when you are away from the hills you miss the rain," remarks this profound meteorologist.

"Ah! perhaps so. However, Donald said, 'His lordship went hout for an hour, and got a brace and a alf. His lordship is no keen for a big bag, ye ken; but is just satisfied if he can get a brace or a couple of brace afore luncheon. It is the exerceez he likes.' I then discovered that Lord —— had had this moor as part of his shooting last year; and I assured Donald I did not hunger after slaughter. So we climbed higher and higher. I found Donald a most instructive companion. He was very great on the ownership of the land about here; and the old families, don't you know; and all that kind of thing. I heard a lot about the

MacDougalls, and how they had all their possessions confiscated in 1745; and how, when the Government pardoned them, and ordered the land to be restored, the Campbells and Breadalbane, into whose hands it had fallen, kept all the best bits for themselves. I asked Donald why they did not complain; he only grinned; I suppose they were afraid to make a row. Then there was one MacDougall, an admiral or captain, don't you know; and he sent a boat to rescue some shipwrecked men, and the boat was swamped. Then he would send another; and that was swamped, too. The Government, Donald informed me, wanted to hang him for his philanthropy; but he had influential friends; and he was let off on the payment of a large sum of money—I suppose out of what Argyll and Breadalbane had left him."

The Youth calmly shifted his hands to the other knee.

"You see, Miss Avon, this was all very interesting; but I had to ask Donald where

the birds were. 'I'll let loose the doag now,' says he. Well; he did so. You would have thought he had let loose a sky-rocket! It was off and away—up hill and down dale—and all his whistling wasn't of the slightest use. 'He's a bit wild,' Donald had to admit; 'but if I had kent you were agoin' shootin' earlier in the morning, I would have given him a run or two to take the freshness hoff. But on a day like this, sir, there's no scent; we will just have to walk them up; they'll lie as close as a water-hen.' So we left the dog to look after himself; and on we pounded. Do you see that long ridge of rugged hill?"

He pointed to the coast-line beyond the bay.

"Yes."

"We had to climb that, to start with; and not even a glimpse of a rabbit all the way up. ''Ave a care, sir,' says Donald; and I took down my gun from my shoulder, expecting to walk into a whole covey at least. 'His lordship shot a brace and a alf of grouse on this wery knoll the last day he shot over

the moor last year.' And now there was less talking, don't you know; and we went cautiously through the heather, working every bit of it, until we got right to the end of the knoll. 'It's fine heather,' says Donald; 'bees would dae well here.' On we went; and Donald's information began again. He pointed out a house on some distant island where Alexander III. was buried. 'But where are the birds?' I asked of him, at last. 'Oh,' says he, 'his lordship was never greedy after the shootin'! A brace or two afore luncheon was all he wanted. He baint none o' your greedy ones, he baint. His lordship shot a hare on this very side last year—a fine long shot.' We went on again: you know what sort of morning it was, Miss Avon?"

"It was hot enough even in the shelter of the trees."

"Up there it was dreadful: not a breath of wind: the sun blistering. And still we ploughed through that knee-deep heather, with the retriever sometimes coming within a mile

of us; and Donald back to his old families. It was the MacDonnells now; he said they had no right to that name; their proper name was MacAlister—Mack Mick Alister, I think he said. 'But where the dickens are the birds?' I asked. 'If we get a brace afore luncheon, we'll do fine,' said he; and then he added, 'There's a braw cold well down there that his lordship aye stopped at.' The hint was enough; we had our dram. Then we went on, and on, and on, and on, until I struck work, and sat down, and waited for the luncheon basket."

"We were so afraid Fred would be late," she said; "the men were all so busy down at the yacht."

"What did it matter?" the Youth said, resignedly. "I was being instructed. He had got further back still now, to the Druids, don't you know, and the antiquity of the Gaelic language. 'What was the river that ran by Rome?' 'The Tiber,' I said. 'And what,' he asked, 'was *Tober* in Gaelic but a

spring or fountain?' And the Tamar in Devonshire was the same thing. And the various Usks—*uska*, it seems, is the Gaelic for water. Well, I'm hanged if I know what that man did *not* talk about!"

"But surely such a keeper must be invaluable," remarked the young lady, innocently.

"Perhaps. I confess I got a little bit tired of it; but no doubt the poor fellow was doing his best to make up for the want of birds. However, we started again after luncheon. And now we came to place after place where his lordship had performed the most wonderful feats last year. And, mind you, the dog wasn't ranging so wild now; if there had been the ghost of a shadow of a feather in the whole district we must have seen it. Then we came to another well where his lordship used to stop for a drink. Then we arrived at a crest where no one who had ever shot on the moor had ever failed to get a brace or two. A brace or two! What we flushed was a covey of sheep that flew like mad things down

the hill. Well, Donald gave in at last. He could not find words to express his astonishment. His lordship had never come along that highest ridge without getting at least two or three shots. And when I set out for home, he still stuck to it; he would not let me take the cartridges out of my gun; he assured me his lordship never failed to get a snipe or a blackcock on the way home. Confound his lordship!"

"And is that all the story?" says the young lady, with her eyes wide open.

"Yes, it is," says he, with a tragic gloom on the handsome face.

"You have not brought home a single bird?"

"Not a feather!—never saw one."

"Nor even a rabbit?"

"Nary rabbit!"

"Why, Fred was up here a short time ago, wanting a few birds for the yacht."

"Oh, indeed," says he, with a sombre contempt. "Perhaps he will go and ask his

lordship for them. In the meantime, I'm going in to dress for dinner. I suppose his lordship would do that, too, after having shot his thirty brace."

"You must not, any way," she says. "There is to be no dressing for dinner to-day; we are all going down to the yacht after."

"At all events," he says, "I must get my shooting things off. Much good I've done with 'em!"

So he goes into the house, and leaves her alone. But this chat together seems to have brightened her up somewhat; and with a careless and cheerful air she goes over to the flower borders and begins culling an assortment of various-hued blossoms. The evening is becoming cooler; she is not so much afraid of the sun's glare; it is a pleasant task; and she is singing, or humming, snatches of songs of the most heterogeneous character.

Then fill up a bumper!—what can I do less
Than drink to the health of my bonny Black Bess?

—this is the point at which she has arrived

when she suddenly becomes silent, and for a second her face is suffused with a conscious colour. It is our young Doctor who has appeared on the gravel path. She does not rise from her stooping position ; but she hurries with her work.

"You are going to decorate the dinner-table, I suppose?" he says, somewhat timidly.

"Yes," she answers, without raising her head. The fingers work nimbly enough : why so much hurry?

"You will take some down to the yacht, too?" he says. "Everything is quite ready now for the start to-morrow."

"Oh, yes!" she says. "And I think I have enough now for the table. I must go in."

"Miss Avon," he says; and she stops—with her eyes downcast. "I wanted to say a word to you. You have once or twice spoken about going away. I wanted to ask you—you won't think it is any rudeness. But if the reason was —if it was the presence of any one that was distasteful to you——"

"Oh, I hope no one will think that!" she answers, quickly; and for one second the soft, black, pathetic eyes meet his. "I am very happy to be amongst such good friends—too happy, I think—I, I must think of other things——"

And here she seems to force this embarrassment away from her; and she says to him, with quite a pleasant air—

"I am so glad to hear that the *White Dove* will sail so much better now. It must be so much more pleasant for you, when you understand all about it."

And then she goes into the house to put the flowers on the table. He, left alone, goes over to the iron seat beneath the ash tree; and takes up the book she has been reading, and bends his eyes on the page. It is not the book he is thinking about.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAIRD'S PLANS.

WHO is first up to thrust aside those delusive yellow blinds that suggest sunshine whether the morning be fair or foul? But the first glance through the panes removes all apprehensions: the ruffled bay, the fluttering ensign, the shining white wings of the *White Dove* are all a summons to the slumbering house. And the mistress of Castle Osprey, as soon as she is dressed, is up stairs and down stairs like a furred flash of lightning. Her cry and potent command—a reminiscence of certain transatlantic experiences — is, "*All aboard for Dan'l's!*" She will not have so fine a sailing morning wasted, especially when Dr. Angus Sutherland is with us.

Strangely enough, when at last we stand on the white decks, and look round on the shining brass and varnished wood, and help to stow away the various articles needed for our cruise, he is the least excited of all those chattering people. There is a certain conscious elation on starting on a voyage, especially on a beautiful morning; but there also may be some vague and dim apprehension. The beginning is here; but the end? Angus walked about with Captain John, and was shown all that had been done to the yacht, and listened in silence.

But the rest were noisy enough, calling for this and that, handing things down the companion, and generally getting in the way of the steward.

"Well, Fred," says our facetious Laird, "have ye hung up all the game that Mr. Smith brought back from the moor yesterday?" and Master Fred was so much tickled by this profound joke that he had to go down into the forecastle to hide his grinning delight, and

went covertly smiling about his work for the next quarter of an hour.

Then the hubbub gradually ceased; for the boats had been swung to the davits, and the *White Dove* was gently slipping away from her moorings. A fine northerly breeze; a ruffled blue sea; and the south all shining before her! How should we care whither the beautiful bird bore us? Perhaps before the night fell we should be listening for the singing of the mermaid of Colonsay.

The wooded shores slowly drew away; the horizon widened; there was no still blue, but a fine windy grey, on the vast plain of the sea that was opening out before us.

"Oh, yes, mem!" says John of Skye to Miss Avon. "I wass sure we would get a good breeze for Mr. Sutherland when he will come back to the yat."

Miss Avon does not answer: she is looking at the wide sea, and at the far islands, with somewhat wistful eyes.

"Would you like to tek the tiller, now,

mem ?" says the bearded skipper, in his most courteous tones. "Mr. Sutherland was aye very proud to see ye at the tiller."

"No, thank you, John," she says.

And then she becomes aware that she has—in her absent mood—spoken somewhat curtly; so she turns and comes over to him, and says in a confidential way—

"To tell you the truth, John, I never feel very safe in steering when the yacht is going before the wind. When she is close-hauled I have something to guide me; but with the wind coming behind I know I may make a blunder without knowing why."

"No, no, mem; you must not let Mr. Sutherland hear you say that: when he was so proud o' learnin' ye; and there is no dancher at ahl of your making a plunder."

But at this moment our young Doctor himself comes on deck; and she quickly moves away to her camp-stool, and plunges herself into a book; while the attentive Mr. Smith provides her with a sunshade and a footstool.

Dr. Sutherland cannot, of course, interfere with her diligent studies.

Meanwhile our hostess is below, putting a few finishing touches to the decoration of the saloon; while the Laird, in the blue-cushioned recess at the head of the table, is poring over *Municipal London*. At length he raises his eyes, and says to his sole companion—

"I told ye, ma'am, he was a good lad—a biddable lad—did I not?"

"You are speaking of your nephew, of course," she says. "Well; it is very kind of him to offer to turn out of his state-room in favour of Dr. Sutherland; but there is really no need for it. Angus is much better accustomed to roughing it on board a yacht."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," says the Laird, with judicial gravity. "Howard is in the right there too. He must insist on it. Dr. Sutherland is your oldest friend. Howard is here on a kind of sufferance. I am sure we are both of us greatly obliged to ye."

Here there was the usual deprecation.

"And I will say," observes the Laird, with the same profound air, "that his conduct since I sent for him has entirely my approval — entirely my approval. Ye know what I mean. I would not say a word to him for the world— no, no—after the first intimation of my wishes, no coercion. Every one for himself: no coercion."

She does not seem so overjoyed as might have been expected.

"Oh, of course not!" she says. "It is only in plays and books that anybody is forced into a marriage; at least you don't often find a man driven to marry anybody against his will. And indeed, sir," she adds, with a faint smile, "you rather frightened your nephew at first. He thought you were going to play the part of a stage guardian, and disinherit him if he did not marry the young lady. But I took the liberty of saying to him that you could not possibly be so unreasonable. Because, you know, if Mary refused to marry him, how could that be any fault of his?"

"Precisely so," said the Laird, in his grand

manner. "A most judeecious and sensible remark. Let him do his part, and I am satisfied. I would not exact impossibeelities from any one, much less from one that I have a particular regard for. And, as I was saying, Howard is a good lad."

The Laird adopted a lighter tone.

"Have ye observed, ma'am, that things are not at all unlikely to turn out as we wished?" he said, in a half-whisper; and there was a secret triumph in his look. "Have ye observed? Oh, yes! young folks are very shy; but their elders are not blind. Did ye ever see two young people that seemed to get on better together on so short an acquaintance?"

"Oh, yes!" she says, rather gloomily; "they seem to be very good friends."

"Yachting is a famous thing for making people acquainted," says the Laird, with increasing delight. "They know one another now as well as though they had been friends for years on the land. Has that struck ye now before?"

"Oh, yes!" she says. There is no delight on *her* face.

"It will jist be the happiness of my old age, if the Lord spares me, to see these two established at Denny-mains," says he, as if he were looking at the picture before his very eyes. "And we have a fine soft air in the west of Scotland; it's no like asking a young English leddy to live in the bleaker parts of the north, or among the east winds of Edinburgh. And I would not have the children sent to any public school, to learn vulgar ways of speech and clipping of words. No, no; I would wale out a young man from our Glasgow University—one familiar with the proper tradeetions of the English language; and he will guard against the clipping fashion of the South, just as against the yaumering of the Edinburgh bodies. Ah will wale him out maself. But no too much education: no, no; that is the worst gift ye can bestow upon bairns. A sound constitution; that is first and foremost. I would rather see a lad out and about shooting rabbits than shut

up wi' a pale face among a lot of books. And the boys will have their play, I can assure ye; I will send that fellow Andrew about his business if he doesna stop netting and snaring. What do I care about the snipping at the shrubs? I will put out turnips on the verra lawn, jist to see the rabbits run about in the morning. The boys shall have their play at Denny-mains, I can assure ye; more play than school-hours, or I'm mistaken!"

The Laird laughed to himself just as if he had been telling a good one about Homesh.

"And no muzzle-loaders," he continued, with a sudden seriousness. "Not a muzzle loader will I have put into their hands. Many's the time it makes me grue to think of my loading a muzzle-loader when I was a boy—loading one barrel, with the other barrel on full-cock, and jist gaping to blow my fingers off. I'm thinking Miss Mary—though she'll no be Miss Mary then—will be sore put to when the boys bring in thrushes and blackbirds they

have shot; for she's a sensitive bit thing; but what I say is, better let them shoot thrushes and blackbirds than bring them up to have white faces ower books. Ah tell ye this: I'll give them a sovereign a-piece for every blackbird they shoot on the wing!"

The Laird had got quite excited; he did not notice that *Municipal London* was dangerously near the edge of the table.

"Andrew will not objeck to the shooting o' blackbirds," he said, with a loud laugh—as if there was something of Homesh's vein in that gardener. "The poor crayture is just daft about his cherries. That's another thing; no interference with bairns in a garden. Let them steal what they like. Green apples? bless ye, they're the life o' children! Nature puts everything to rights. She kens better than books. If I catched the schoolmaster lockin' up they boys in their play-hours, my word but I'd send him fleein'!"

He was most indignant with this schoolmaster, although he was to be of his own

"waling." He was determined that the lads should have their play, lessons or no lessons. Green apples he preferred to Greek. The dominie would have to look out.

"Do you think, ma'am," he says, in an insidious manner; "do ye think she would like to have a furnished house in London for pairt of the year? She might have her friends to see——"

Now at last this is too much. The gentle, small creature has been listening with a fine, proud, hurt air on her face, and with tears near to her eyes. Is it thus that her Scotch student, of whom she is the fierce champion, is to be thrust aside?

"Why," she says, with an indignant warmth; "you take it all for granted! I thought it was a joke. Do you really think your nephew is going to marry Mary? And Angus Sutherland in love with her!"

"God bless me!" exclaimed the Laird, with such a start that the bulky *Municipal London* banged down on the cabin floor.

Was it the picking up of that huge tome, or the consciousness that he had been betrayed into an unusual ejaculation, that crimsoned the Laird's face? When he sate upright again, however, wonder was the chief expression visible in his eyes.

"Of course I have no right to say so," she instantly and hurriedly adds: "it is only a guess—a suspicion. But haven't you seen it? And until quite recently I had other suspicions, too. Why, what do you think would induce a man in Angus Sutherland's position to spend such a long time in idleness?"

But by this time the Laird had recovered his equanimity. He was not to be disturbed by any bogie. He smiled serenely.

"We will see, ma'am; we will see. If it is so with the young man, it is a peety. But you must admit yourself that ye see how things are likely to turn out?"

"I don't know," she said, with reluctance: she would not admit that she had been grievously troubled during the past few days.

"Very well, ma'am, very well," said the Laird, blithely. "We will see who is right. I am not a gambler, but I would wager ye a gold ring, a sixpence, and a silver thimble that I am no so far out. I have my eyes open; oh, aye! Now I am going on deck to see where we are."

And so the Laird rose, and put the bulky volume by, and passed along the saloon to the companion. We heard

Sing tántara! Sing tántara!

as his head appeared. He was in a gay humour.

Meanwhile the *White Dove*, with all sail set, had come along at a spanking pace. The weather threatened change, it is true; there was a deep gloom overhead; but along the southern horizon there was a blaze of yellow light which had the odd appearance of being a sunset in the middle of the day; and in this glare lay the long blue promontory known as the Rhinns of Islay, within sight of the

Irish coast. And so we went down by Easdail, and past Colipoll and its slate-quarries; and we knew this constant breeze would drive us through the swirls of the Dorus Mohr—the "Great Gate." And were we listening, as we drew near in the afternoon to the rose-purple bulk of Scarba, for the low roar of Corrievrechan? We knew the old refrain:—

As you pass through Jura's Sound
Bend your course by Scarba's shore;
Shun, oh, shun the gulf profound
Where Corrievrechan's surges roar!

But now there is no ominous murmur along those distant shores. Silence and a sombre gloom hang over the two islands. We are glad to shun this desolate coast; and glad that the *White Dove* is carrying us away to the pleasanter south, when, behold! behold! another sight! As we open out the dreaded gulf, Corrievrechan itself becomes but an open lane leading out to the west; and there, beyond the gloom, amid the golden seas, lies afar the music-haunted Colonsay! It is the calm of

the afternoon; the seas lie golden around the rocks; surely the sailors can hear her singing now for the lover she lost so long ago! What is it that thrills the brain so, and fills the eyes with tears, when we can hear no sound at all coming over the sea?

It is the Laird who summons us back to actualities.

"It would be a strange thing," says he, "if Tom Galbraith were in that island at this very meenit. Ah'm sure he was going there."

And Captain John helps.

"I not like to go near Corrievrechan," he says, with a grin, "when there is a flood tide and half a gale from the sou'-west. It is an ahfu' place," he adds, more seriously, "an ahfu' place."

"I should like to go through," Angus Sutherland says, quite inadvertently.

"Aye, would ye, sir?" says Captain John, eagerly. "If there wass only you and me on board, I would tek you through ferry well—with the wind from the norrard and an ebb

tide. Oh, yes! I would do that; and maybe we will do it this year yet!"

"I do not think I am likely to see Corrievrechan again this year," said he, quite quietly — so quietly that scarcely any one heard. But Mary Avon heard.

Well, we managed, after all, to bore through the glassy swirls of the Dorus Mohr — the outlying pickets, as it were, of the fiercer whirlpools and currents of Corrievrechan — and the light breeze still continuing we crept along in the evening past Crinan, and along the lonely coast of Knapdale, with the giant Paps of Jura darkening in the west. Night fell; the breeze almost died away; we turned the bow of the *White Dove* towards an opening in the land, and the flood tide gently bore her into the wide, silent, empty loch. There did not seem to be any light on the shores. Like a tall, grey phantom the yacht glided through the gloom; we were somewhat silent on deck.

But there was a radiant yellow glow coming

through the skylight; and Master Fred had done his best to make the saloon cheerful enough. And where there is supper there ought to be other old-fashioned institutions—singing, for example; and how long was it since we had heard anything about the Queen's Maries, or "Ho, ro, clansmen!" or the Irish Brigade? Nobody, however, appeared to think of these things. This was a silent and lonely loch, and the gloom of night was over land and water; but we still seemed to have before our eyes the far island amid the golden seas. And was there not still lingering in the night air some faint echo of the song of Colonsay? It is a heart-breaking song; it is all about the parting of lovers.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SUNDAY IN FAR SOLITUDES.

Mary Avon is seated all alone on deck, looking rather wistfully around her at this solitary Loch-na-Chill — that is, the Loch of the Burying Place. It is Sunday morning, and there is a more than Sabbath peace dwelling over sea and shore. Not a ripple on the glassy sea; a pale haze of sunshine on the islands in the south; a stillness as of death along the low-lying coast. A seal rises to the surface of the calm sea, and regards her for a moment with his soft black eyes; then slowly subsides. She has not seen him; she is looking far away.

Then a soft step is heard on the companion; and the manner of the girl instantly

changes. Are these tears that she hastily brushes aside? But her face is all smiles to welcome her friend. She declares that she is charmed with the still beauty of this remote and solitary loch.

Then other figures appear; and at last we are all summoned on deck for morning service. It is not an elaborate ceremony; there are no candles, or genuflexions, or embroidered altar-cloths. But the Laird has put on a black frock coat, and the men have put aside their scarlet cowls and wear smart sailor-looking cloth caps. Then the Laird gravely rises, and opens his book.

Sometimes, it is true, our good friend has almost driven us to take notice of his accent, and we have had our little jokes on board about it; but you do not pay much heed to these peculiarities when the strong and resonant voice — amid the strange silence of this Loch of the Burying Place—reads out the 103rd Psalm: "Like as a father peetieth his children," he may say; but one does not

heed that. And who is to notice that, as he comes to these words, he lifts his eyes from the book and fixes them for a moment on Mary Avon's downcast face? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children." Then, when he had finished the Psalm, he turned to the New Testament, and read in the same slow and reverent manner the 6th chapter of Matthew. This concluded the service; it was not an elaborate one.

Then, about an hour afterwards, the Laird, on being appealed to by his hostess, gave it as his opinion that there would be no Sabbath desecration at all in our going ashore to

examine the ruins of what appeared to be an ancient chapel, which we could make out by the aid of our glasses on the green slope above the rocks. And as our young friends—Angus and the Youth—idly paddled us away from the yacht, the Laird began to apologise to his hostess for not having lengthened the service by the exposition of some chosen text.

"Ye see, ma'am," he observed, "some are gifted in that way, and some not. My father, now, had an amazing power of expounding and explaining—I am sure there was nothing in *Hutcheson's Exposeetion* he had not in his memory. A very famous man he was in those days as an Anti-Lifter—very famous; there were few who could argue with him on that memorable point."

"But what did you call him, sir?" asks his hostess, with some vague notion that the Laird's father had lived in the days of body-snatchers.

"An Anti-Lifter: it was a famous controversy; but ye are too young to remember of

it perhaps. And now in these days we are more tolerant, and rightly so; I do not care whether the minister lifts the sacramental bread before distribution or not, now that there is no chance of Popery getting into our Presbyterian Church in disguise. It is the speerit, not the form, that is of importance: our Church authoritatively declares that the efficacy of the sacraments depends not 'upon any virtue in them or in him that doth administer them.' Aye; that is the cardinal truth. But in those days they considered it right to guard against Popery in every manner; and my father was a prominent Anti-Lifter; and well would he argue and expound on that and most other doctrinal subjects. But I have not much gift that way," added the Laird, modestly; quite forgetting with what clearness he had put before us the chief features of the great Semple case.

"I don't think you have anything to regret, sir," said our young Doctor, as he carelessly worked the oar with one hand, "that you did

not bother the brains of John and his men with any exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. Isn't it an odd thing that the common fishermen and boatmen of the Sea of Galilee understood the message Christ brought them just at once? and now a days, when we have millions of churches built, and millions of money being spent, and tons upon tons of sermons being written every year, we seem only to get further and further into confusion and chaos. Fancy the great army of able-bodied men that go on expounding and expounding; and the learning and time and trouble they bestow on their work; and scarcely any two of them agreed; while the people who listen to them are all in a fog. Simon Peter, and Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee, must have been men of the most extraordinary intellect. They understood at once; they were commissioned to teach; and they had not even a Shorter Catechism to go by."

The Laird looked at him doubtfully. He

did not know whether to recognise in him a true ally or not. However, the mention of the Shorter Catechism seemed to suggest solid ground; and he was just about entering into the question of the Subordinate Standards when an exclamation of rage on the part of his nephew startled us. That handsome lad, during all this theological discussion, had been keeping a watchful and matter-of-fact eye on a number of birds on the shore; and now that we were quite close to the sandy promontory, he had recognised them.

"Look! look!" he said, in tones of mingled eagerness and disappointment. "Golden plovers, every one of them! Isn't it too bad? It's always like this on Sunday. I will bet you won't get within half a mile of them to-morrow!"

And he refused to be consoled as we landed on the sandy shore; and found the golden-dusted, long-legged birds running along before us, or flitting from patch to patch of the moist greensward. We had to leave him behind in

moody contemplation as we left the shore and scrambled up the rugged and rocky slope to the ruins of this solitary little chapel.

There was an air of repose and silence about these crumbling walls and rusted gates that was in consonance with a habitation of the dead. And first of all, outside, we came upon an upright Iona cross, elaborately carved with strange figures of men and beasts. But inside the small building, lying prostrate among the grass and weeds, there was a collection of those memorials that would have made an antiquarian's heart leap for joy. It is to be feared that our guesses about the meaning of the emblems on the tombstones were of a crude and superficial character. Were these Irish chiefs, those stone figures with the long sword and the harp beside them? Was the recurrent shamrock a national or religious emblem? And why was the effigy of this ancient worthy accompanied by a pair of pincers, an object that looked like a tooth-comb, and a winged griffin? Again, outside

but still within the sacred walls, we came upon still further tombs of warriors, most of them hidden among the long grass; and here and there we tried to brush the weeds away. It was no bad occupation for a Sunday morning, in this still and lonely burial-place above the wide seas.

On going on board again we learned from John of Skye that there were many traces of an ancient ecclesiastical colonisation about this coast; and that in especial there were a ruined chapel and other remains on one of a small group of islands that we could see on the southern horizon. Accordingly, after luncheon, we fitted out an expedition to explore that distant island. The Youth was particularly anxious to examine these ecclesiastical remains; he did not explain to everybody that he had received from Captain John a hint that the shores of this sainted island swarmed with seals.

And now the gig is shoved off; the four oars strike the glassy water; and away we

go in search of the summer isles in the south. The Laird settles himself comfortably in the stern; it seems but natural that he should take Mary Avon's hand in his, just as if she were a little child.

"And ye must know, Miss Mary," he says, quite cheerfully, "that if ever ye should come to live in Scotland, ye will not be persecuted with our theology. No, no; far from it; we respect every one's religion, if it is sincere; though we cling to our own. And why should we not cling to it, and guard it from error? We have had to fight for our civil and religious leeberties inch by inch, foot by foot; and we have won. The blood of the saints has not been shed in vain. The cry of the dying and wounded on many a Lanarkshire moor—when the cavalry were riding about, and hewing and slaughtering—was not wasted on the air! The Lord heard, and answered. And we do well to guard what we have gained; and, if need were, there are plenty of Scotsmen alive at this day who would freely spend their lives

in defending their own releegion. But ye need not fear. These are the days of great toleration. Ye might live in Scotland all your life, and not hear an ill word said of the Episcopal Church!"

After having given this solemn assurance the Laird cast a glance of sly humour at Angus Sutherland.

"I will confess," said he, "when Dr. Sutherland brought that up this morning about Peter and Andrew, and James and John, I was a bit put out. But then," he added, triumphantly, "ye must remember that in those days they had not the inseedious attacks of Prelacy to guard against. There was no need for them to erect bulwarks of the faith. But in our time it is different, or rather it has been different. I am glad to think that we of the Scotch Church are emancipated from the fear of Rome; and I am of opeenion that with the advancing times they are in the right who advocate a little moderation in the way of applying and exacting the Standards. No,

no; I am not for bigotry. I assure ye, Miss Mary, ye will find far fewer bigots in Scotland than people say."

"I have not met any, sir," remarks Miss Mary.

"I tell ye what," said he, solemnly; "I am told on good authority that there is a movement among the U. P. Presbytery to send up to the Synod a sort of memorial with regard to the Subordinate Standards—that is, ye know, the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms—just hinting, in a mild sort of way, that these are of human composition, and necessarily imperfect; and that a little amount of—of——"

The Laird could not bring himself to pronounce the word "laxity." He stammered and hesitated, and at last said—

"Well; a little judeecious liberality of construction—do ye see?—on certain points is admissible, while clearly defining other points on which the Church will not admit of question. However, as I was saying, we have little fear

of Popery in the Presbyterian Church now; and ye would have no need to fear it in your English Church if the English people were not so sorely wanting in humour. If they had any sense of fun they would have laughed those millinery, play-acting people out o' their Church long ago——"

But at this moment it suddenly strikes the Laird that a fair proportion of the people he is addressing are of the despised English race; and he hastily puts in a disclaimer.

"I meant the clergy, of course," says he, most unblushingly, "the English clergy, as having no sense of humour at all—none at all. Dear me, what a stupid man I met at Dunoon last year! There were some people on board the steamer talking about Homesh —ye know, he was known to every man who travelled up and down the Clyde—and they told the English clergyman about Homesh wishing he was a stot. 'Wishing he was a what?' says he. Would ye believe it, it took about ten meenutes to explain the story to

him bit by bit; and at the end of it his face was as blank as a bannock before it is put on the girdle!"

We could see the laughter brimming in the Laird's eyes; he was thinking either of the stot or some other story about Homesh. But his reverence for Sunday prevailed. He fell back on the Standards; and was most anxious to assure Miss Avon that, if ever she were to live in Scotland, she would suffer no persecution at all, even though she still determined to belong to the Episcopal Church.

"We have none in the neighbourhood of Strathgovan," he remarked, quite simply; "but ye could easily drive in to Glasgow"—and he did not notice the quick look of surprise and inquiry that Angus Sutherland immediately directed from the one to the other. But Mary Avon was looking down.

It was a long pull; but by and by the features of the distant island became clearer; and we made out an indentation that probably meant a creek of some sort. But what was

our surprise, as we drew nearer and nearer to what we supposed to be an uninhabited island, to find the topmast of a vessel appearing over some rocks that guard the entrance to the bay? As we pulled into the still waters, and passed the heavy black smack lying at anchor, perhaps the two solitary creatures in charge of her were no less surprised at the appearance of strangers in these lonely waters. They came ashore just as we landed. They explained, in more or less imperfect English, that they were lobster-fishers; and that this was a convenient haven for their smack, while they pulled in their small boat round the shores to look after the traps. And if—when the Laird was not looking—his hostess privately negotiated for the sale of half-a-dozen live lobsters, and if young Smith also took a quiet opportunity of inquiring about the favourite resorts of the seals; what then? Mice will play when they get the chance. The Laird was walking on with Mary Avon; and was telling her about the Culdees.

And all the time we wandered about the deserted island, and explored its ruins, and went round its bays, the girl kept almost exclusively with the Laird, or with her other and gentle friend; and Angus had but little chance of talking to her or walking with her. He was left pretty much alone. Perhaps he was not greatly interested in the ecclesiastical remains. But he elicited from the two lobster-fishers that the hay scattered on the floor of the chapel was put there by fishermen, who used the place to sleep in when they came to the island. And they showed him the curious tombstone of the saint, with its sculptured elephant and man on horseback. Then he went away by himself to trace out the remains of a former civilisation on the island; the withered stumps of a blackthorn hedge, and the abundant nettle. A big rat ran out; the only visible tenant of the crumbled habitation.

Meanwhile the others had climbed to the summit of the central hill; and behold! all around the smooth bays were black and shining

objects, like the bladders used on fishermen's nets. But these moved this way and that; sometimes there was a big splash as one disappeared. The Youth sate and regarded this splendid hunting-ground with a breathless interest.

"I'm thinking ye ought to get your sealskin to-morrow, Miss Mary," says the Laird, for once descending to worldly things.

"Oh, I hope no one will be shot for me!" she said. "They are such gentle creatures."

"But young men will be young men, ye know," said he, cheerfully. "When I was Howard's age, and knew I had a gun within reach, a sight like that would have made my heart jump."

"Yes," said the nephew; "but you never do have a sight like that when you have a rifle within reach."

"Wait till to-morrow—wait till to-morrow," said the Laird, cheerfully. "And now we will go down to the boat. It is a long pull back to the yacht."

But the Laird's nephew got even more savage as we rowed back in the calm, pale twilight. Those wild duck would go whirring by within easy shot—apparently making away to the solitudes of Loch Swen. Then that greyish-yellow thing on the rocks—could it be a sheep? We watched it for several minutes, as the gig went by in the dusk; then, with a heavy plunge or two, the seal floundered down and into the water. The splash echoed through the silence.

"Did you ever see the like of that?" the Youth exclaimed, mortified beyond endurance. "Did you ever? As big as a cow! And as sure as you get such a chance, it is Sunday!"

"I am very glad," says Miss Avon. "I hope no one will shoot a seal on my account."

"The seal ought to be proud to have such a fate," said the Laird, gallantly. "Ye are saving him from a miserable and lingering death of cold, or hunger, or old age. And whereas in that case nobody would care anything or see anything more about him, ye

give him a sort of immortality in your dining-room, and ye are never done admiring him. A proud fellow he ought to be. And if the seals about here are no very fine in their skins, still it would be a curiosity, and at present we have not one at all at Denny-mains."

Again this reference to Denny-mains: Angus Sutherland glanced from one to the other; but what could he see in the dusk?

Then we got back to the yacht: what a huge grey ghost she looked in the gloom! And as we were all waiting to get down the companion, Angus Sutherland put his hand on his hostess's arm, and stayed her.

"You must be wrong," said he, simply. "I have offended her somehow. She has not spoken ten words to me to-day."

CHAPTER XV.

HIDDEN SPRINGS.

"Well, perhaps it is better, after all," says a certain person, during one of those opportunities for brief conjugal confidences that are somewhat rare on board ship. She sighs as she speaks. "I thought it was going to be otherwise. But it will be all the better for Angus not to marry for some years to come. He has a great future before him; and a wife would really be an encumbrance. Young professional men should never marry; their circumstances keep on improving, but they can't improve their wives."

All this is very clear and sensible. It is not always that this person talks in so matter-of-fact a way. If, however, everything has turned

out for the best, why this sudden asperity with which she adds—

"But I did not expect it of Mary."

And then again—

"She might at least be civil to him."

"She is not uncivil to him. She only avoids him."

"I consider that her open preference for Howard Smith is just a little bit too ostentatious," she says, in rather an injured way. "Indeed, if it comes to that, she would appear to prefer the Laird to either of them. Any stranger would think she wanted to marry Denny-mains himself."

"Has it ever occurred to you," is the respectful question, "that a young woman—say once in a century—may be in that state of mind in which she would prefer not to marry anybody?"

Abashed? Not a bit of it! There is a calm air of superiority on her face: she is above trifles and taunts.

"If unmarried women had any sense," she

says, "that would be their normal state of mind."

And she might have gone on enlarging on this text, only that at this moment Mary Avon comes along from the ladies' cabin; and the morning greetings take place between the two women. Is it only a suspicion that there is a touch of coldness in the elder woman's manner? Is it possible that her love for Mary Avon may be decreasing by ever so little a bit?

Then Angus comes down the companion: he has got some wild flowers; he has been ashore. And surely he ought to give them to the younger of the two women: she is of the age when such pretty compliments are a natural thing. But no. The flowers are for his hostess—for the decoration of her table; and Mary Avon does not look up as they are handed along.

Then young Mr. Smith makes his appearance; he has been ashore too. And his complaints and protests fill the air.

"Didn't I tell you?" he says, appealing

more especially to the women-folk for sympathy. "Didn't I tell you? You saw all those golden plover yesterday, and the wild duck further up the loch: there is not a sign of one of them! I knew it would be so. As sure as Monday begins, you never get a chance! I will undertake to say that when we get to those islands where all the seals were yesterday, we sha'n't see one to-day!"

"But are we to stop here a whole day in order to let you go and shoot seals?" says his hostess.

"You can't help it," says he, laughing. "There isn't any wind."

"Angus," she says—as if nobody knew anything about the wind but the young Doctor—"is that so?"

"Not a doubt of it," he says. "But it is a beautiful day. You might make up a luncheon-party, and have a pic-nic by the side of the Saint's Well—down in the hollow, you know."

"Much chance I shall have with the seals,

then!" remarks the other young man, good-naturedly enough.

However, it is enough that the suggestion has come from Angus Sutherland. A pic-nic on the Island of the Saints is forthwith commanded—seals or no seals. And while Master Fred, immediately after breakfast, begins his preparations, the Laird helps by carefully putting a corkscrew in his pocket. It is his invariable custom. We are ready for any emergency.

And if the golden plover, and mergansers, and seals appear to know that the new, busy, brisk working-days have begun again, surely we ought to know it too. Here are the same silent shores; and the calm blue seas and blue sky; and the solitary islands in the south—all just as they were yesterday; but we have a secret sense that the lassitude and idleness of Sunday are over, and that there is something of freedom in the air. The Laird has no longer any need to keep a check on his tongue: those stories about Homesh may

bubble up to the surface of his mind just as they please. And indeed he is exceedingly merry and facetious as the preparations go on for this excursion. When at length he gets into the stern of the boat he says to his companion—

> "*There was Mary Beaton, and Mary Seaton,*
> *And Mary Avon, and me.*

—What ails ye, lass? I have not heard much of your singing of late."

"You would not have me sing profane songs on Sunday?" she says, demurely.

"No; but I mean long before Sunday. However," he says, cheerfully, and looking at her, "there is a wonderful change in ye—wonderful! Well do I mind the day I first saw ye, on the quay; though it seems a long time since then. Ye were a poor white bit thing then; I was astonished; and the next day too, when ye were lame as well, I said to myself, 'Well; it's high time that bit lass had a breath o' the sea air.' And now—why ye

just mind me o' the lasses in the Scotch songs —the country lasses, ye know—with the fine colour on your face."

And indeed this public statement did not tend to decrease the sun-brown that now tinged Mary Avon's cheeks.

"These lads," said he—no doubt referring to his nephew and to Angus Sutherland, who were both labouring at the long oars—"are much too attentive to ye, putting ye under the shadow of the sails, and bringing ye parasols and things like that. No, no; don't you be afraid of getting sun-burned; it is a comely and wholesome thing: is it not reasonable that human beings need the sunlight as much as plants? Just ask your friend Dr. Sutherland that; though a man can guess as much without a microscope. Keep ye in the sun, Miss Mary; never mind the brown on your cheeks, whatever the young men say: I can tell ye ye are looking a great deal better now than when ye stepped on shore—a shilpit pale bit thing—on that afternoon."

Miss Avon had not been in the habit of receiving lectures like this about her complexion, and she seemed rather confused; but fortunately the measured noise of the rowlocks prevented the younger men from overhearing.

> "*There was Mary Beaton, and Mary Seaton,*
> *And Mary Avon, and me.*"—

continued the Laird, in his facetious way; and he contentedly patted the hand of the girl beside him. "I fear I am growing very fond of idleness."

"I am sure, sir, you are so busy during the rest of the year," says this base flatterer, "that you should be able to enjoy a holiday with a clear conscience."

"Well, perhaps so—perhaps so," said the Laird, who was greatly pleased. "And yet, let one work as hard as one can, it is singular how little one can do, and what little thanks ye get for doing it. I am sure those people in Strathgovan spend half their lives in fault-finding; and expect ye to do everything they

can think of without asking them for a farthing. At the last meeting of the ratepayers in the Burgh Hall I heckled them, I can tell ye. I am not a good speaker—no, no; far from it; but I can speak plain. I use words that can be driven into people's heads; and I will say this, that some o' those people in Strathgovan have a skull of most extraordinar' thickness. But said I to them, 'Do ye expect us to work miracles? Are we to create things out of nothing? If the rates are not to be increased, where are the new gas-lamps to come from? Do ye think we can multiply gas-lamps as the loaves and fishes were multiplied?' I'm thinking," added the Laird, with a burst of hearty laughter, "that the thickest-skulled of them all understood that—eh?"

"I should hope so," remarked Miss Avon.

Then the measured rattle of the oars: it wants hard pulling against this fiercely running tide; indeed, to cheat it in a measure, we have to keep working along the coast and across the mouth of Loch Swen.

"There was Mary Beaton, and Mary Seaton,
And Mary Avon, and me"—

says the Laird, as a playful introduction to another piece of talking. "I have been asking myself once or twice whether I know any one in the whole kingdom of Scotland better than you."

"Than me, sir?" she says, with a start of surprise.

"Yes," he says, sententiously. "That is so. And I have had to answer myself in the naygative. It is wonderful how ye get to know a person on board a yacht. I just feel as if I had spent years and years with ye; so that there is not any one I know with whom I am better acquaint. When ye come to Denny-mains, I shall be quite disappointed if ye look surprised or strange to the place. I have got it into my head that ye must have lived there all your life. Will ye undertake to say," he continues, in the same airy manner, "that ye do not know the little winding path that goes up through the trees to the flag-staff—eh?"

"I'm afraid I don't remember it," she says, with a smile.

"Wait till ye see the sunsets ye can see from there!" he says, proudly. "We can see right across Glasgow to Tennants' Stalk; and in the afternoon the smoke is all turning red and brown with the sunset—many's and many's the time I have taken Tom Galbraith to the hill, and asked him whether they have finer sunsets at Naples or Venice. No, no; give me fire and smoke and meestery for a strong sunset. But just the best time of the year, as ye'll find out"—and here he looked in a kindly way at the girl—"where there is a bit wood near the house, is the spring-time. When ye see the primroses and the blue-bells about the roots of the trees—when ye see them so clear and bright among the red of the withered leaves—well, ye cannot help thinking about some of our old Scotch songs, and there's something in that that's just like to bring the tears to your een. We have a wonderful and great inheritance in these songs,

as ye'll find out, my lass. You English know only of Burns; but a Scotchman, who is familiar with the ways and the feelings and the speech of the peasantry, has a sort o' uncomfortable impression that Burns is at times just a bit artifeecial and leeterary—especially when he is masquerading in fine English; though at other times ye get the real lilt—what a man would sing to himself when he was all alone at the plough, in the early morning, and listening to the birds around him. But there are others that we are proud of, too—Tannahill, and John Mayne, that wrote about *Logan Braes;* and Hogg, and Motherwell: I'm sure o' this, that when ye read Motherwell's *Jeanie Morrison*, ye'll no be able to go on for greetin'."

"I beg your pardon?" said Miss Avon.

But the Laird is too intent on recalling some of the lines to notice that she has not quite understood him.

"They were school-mates," he says, in an absent way. "When school was over, they

wandered away like lad and lass; and he writes the poem in after-life, and speaks to her he has never seen since.

"Oh, mind ye, love, how oft we left
The deavin' dinsome toun,
To wander by the green burn-side,
And hear its water croon?
The simmer leaves hung ower our heads,
The flowers burst round our feet;
And in the gloamin' o' the wood
The throssil whistled sweet.

. . . .

"And on the knowe aboon the burn
For hours thegither sat
In the silentness o' joy, till baith
Wi' very gladness grat!
Aye, aye, dear Jeanie Morrison,
Tears trinkled down your cheek,
Like dew-beads on a rose, yet nane
Had ony power to speak!"

The Laird's voice faltered for a moment; but he pretended he had great difficulty in remembering the poem, and confessed that he must have mixed up the verses. However, he said he remembered the last one.

"O dear, dear Jeanie Morrison,
Since we were sundered young,
I've never seen your face, nor heard
The music of your tongue;
But I could hug all wretchedness,
And happy could I dee,
Did I but ken your heart still dreamed
O' bygane days and me!"

Just as he finished, the old Laird turned aside his head. He seemed to be suddenly interested in something over at the mouth of Loch Swen. Then he quickly passed his red silk handkerchief across his face, and said, in a gay manner—though he was still looking in that alien direction—

"This is a desperate hard pull. We had nothing like this yesterday. But it will do the lads good; it will take the stiffness out of their backs."

However, one of the lads—to wit, the Laird's nephew—admitted at length that he had had quite enough of it, and gave up his oar to the man he had relieved. Then he came into the stern, and was very pleasant and talkative;

and said he had quite made up his mind to find all the seals gone from the shores of the sacred island.

So formidable, indeed, was the tide, that we had to keep well away to the south of the island before venturing to make across for it; and when at length we did put the bow straight for the little harbour, the mid-channel current swept us away northward, as if the gig had been a bit of cork. But the four oars kept manfully to their work; and by dint of hard pulling and pertinacious steering we managed to run into the little bay.

We found it quite deserted. The two lobster-fishers had left in the morning; we were in sole possession of this lonely island, set amid the still summer seas.

But by this time it was nearly noon; and so it was arranged that the men of the party should content themselves with a preliminary expedition, to find out, by stealthy crawlings out to the various bays, where the seals were chiefly congregated; while the women were

to remain by the Saints' Well, to help Fred to get luncheon spread out and arranged. And this was done; and thus it happened that, after Master Fred had finished his work, and retired down to his mates in the gig, the two women-folk were left alone.

"Why, Mary," said the one of them, quite cheerfully (as we afterwards heard), "it is quite a long time since you and I had a chat together."

"Yes, it is."

"One gets so often interfered with on board, you know. Aren't you going to begin now and make a sketch?"

She had brought with her her sketching materials; but they were lying unopened on a rock hard by.

"No, I think not," she said, listlessly.

"What is the matter with you?" said her kind friend, pretending to laugh at her. "I believe you are fretting over the loss of the money, after all."

"Oh, no: I hope you do not think I am

fretting!" said she, anxiously. "No one has said that? I am really quite content—I am very—happy."

She managed to say the word.

"I am very glad to hear it," said her friend; "but I have a great mind to scold you all the same."

The girl looked up. Her friend went over to her, and sate down beside her, and took her hand in hers.

"Don't be offended, Mary," she said, good-naturedly. "I have no right to interfere; but Angus is an old friend of mine. Why do you treat him like that?"

The girl looked at her with a sort of quick, frightened, inquiring glance; and then said—as if she were almost afraid to hear herself speak—

"Has he spoken to you?"

"Yes. Now don't make a mole-hill into a mountain, Mary. If he has offended you, tell him. Be frank with him. He would not vex you for the world: do you think he would?"

The girl's hand was beginning to tremble a good deal; and her face was white, and piteous.

"If you only knew him as well as I do, you would know he is as gentle as a child: he would not offend any one. Now, you will be friends with him again, Mary?"

The answer was a strange one. The girl broke into a fit of wild crying, and hid her face in her friend's bosom, and sobbed there so that her whole frame was shaken with the violence of her misery.

"Mary, what is it?" said the other, in great alarm.

Then, by and by, the girl rose, and went away over to her sketching materials for a minute or two. Then she returned: her face still rather white, but with a certain cold and determined look on it.

"It is all a mistake," said she, speaking very distinctly. "Dr. Sutherland has not offended me in the least: please tell him so if he speaks again. I hope we shall always be good friends."

She opened out her colour-box.

"And then," said she, with an odd laugh, "before you think I have gone crazed, please remember it isn't every day one loses such an enormous fortune as mine."

She began to get her other sketching things ready. And she was very cheerful about it, and very busy; and she was heard to be singing to herself—

Then fill up a bumper: what can I do less
Than drink to the health of my bonny Black Bess!

But her friend, when by chance she turned her head a little bit, perceived that the pale and piteous face was still wet with tears; and the praises of Black Bess did not wholly deceive her.

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